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LADY ANNE GRANARD;

OR,

KEEPING UP APPEARANCES.

BY L. E. L.,

(THE LATE MRS. MACLEAN)

AUTHORESS OF "ETHEL CHURCHILL,"

"THE IMPROVISATRICE," &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

Lady Anne Granard is a domestic story of the present day, and is therefore decidedly different to those captivating romances already given to the world by L. E. L. ; but all who have enjoyed personal acquaintance with that highly-gifted lady, will immediately perceive that the story is written in her own peculiar conversational style. It combines a playful and keenly satirical vein, with a good-humoured willingness to escape from her own perception of the ridiculous and the blameable, in order to rest on those recollections of the benevolence she loved, the virtue she venerated, or the poetic sense of all that was excellent and beautiful, with which her spirit was so essentially imbued, and to which her thoughts were constantly habituated. It is necessary, however, to acquaint the reader that the plan and first portion of the work only are the production of the late Mrs. Maclean (L. E. L.). They

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are the last literary labours of that deeply-lamented lady. The friend who has seen the work through the press, and ventured to conclude the story, so prematurely bereft of its true parent, can only entreat indulgence for her humble efforts, which she believes to be in strict accordance with the intentions of the author.

LADY ANNE GRANARD;

OR

KEEPING UP APPEARANCES.

CHAPTER I.

No one dies but some one is glad of it.

If this be true of deaths in general, it was very particularly true in that of Mr. Glentworth. Very rich, he died without a will or a regret. He left behind neither servant, dog, cat, nor even a customary arm-chair, to miss him. He had always lived in furnished houses, and kept his "two maids and a man" on board wages; he jobbed his carriage, and changed his tradespeople every week.

Still, joy and sorrow are the inseparable companions of death, and they were attendants even on that of Mr. Glentworth. His property, which was great, went to a nephew, who had never received from him the least kindness, and who would not have inherited a guinea, or an acre, if his relative had not had a

superstitious dread of shortening his life by making a will.

Mr. Glentworth hated his nephew, both with the general hatred with which men regard their heirs, and also with an individual hatred. The good and the generous action of which we feel incapable is a reproach when done by another; and the old man could not forgive the younger one for being better than himself. He was gone, however; and the one whom of all others he disliked came in for the accumulated wealth of years. If ever heir might be permitted "one touch of natural joy," it was in the case of Mr. Glentworth.

So much for the rejoicing, and now for the regretting.

"I never was so sorry for any thing as for Mr. Glentworth's death," said Isabella Granard, endeavouring to screen her face from a small, sharp rain, to which her place in the rumble of a travelling carriage left her quite exposed.

"I do believe that he died on purpose to plague us," replied Georgiana, her elder sister by two years.

"The ruling passion strong in death," said the other, laughing; "for Fanchette tells me he was a torment to every one about him. Still, dying on purpose to plague five girls of whom he knew nothing was what Lord Penrhyn would call a very strong measure indeed."

"I would not have cared if he had lived till after Christmas," continued Georgiana.

“Mr. Glentworth is much obliged to you,” was her sister’s answer.

“I was wrong,” cried Georgiana, her kind feelings instantly reproaching her for her careless mention of the dead. “But you must allow that it is very provoking, when we were so comfortable at Brighton, to be hurried back to dull, dreary London.”

“I am sure,” replied the other, “that I am as sorry as you can be. I wish mamma had taken the first offer, and let our house for a year.”

“But mamma,” said Georgiana, looking a little aghast, “would not spend the season out of London for the world.”

“What pleasure she can find in it,” was the reply, “is a mystery to me. London is all very delightful for rich people, but those who are as poor as ourselves had better be any where else.”

“I wish we lived in the country,” cried Georgiana: “if we had but a cottage and a pretty garden, how happy we should be!”

“Instead,” exclaimed Isabella, “of spending three parts of our time in that odious back parlour. Child as I was when we left it, I can recollect the dear old shrubberies of Granard Park.”

“And yet, mamma,” returned the other, “always talks of having been buried alive there.”

“Mamma,” was the answer, “calls every body buried alive who lives out of a certain class. Our opposite neighbours, the Palmers, are as much buried

alive as if they did not live in the same street as ourselves. Indeed, by her account, it is only a very small portion of the world who exist at all."

"I wish we were very rich," exclaimed Georgiana, with a deep sigh.

"Well, as mamma would say, you must marry some one very rich—that is your only chance of riches."

"But rich people are always old and disagreeable," replied Georgiana, with another sigh.

"Mamma would say," interrupted Isabella, "what nonsense you are talking; very rich people are never disagreeable — that is, unless they have made their money in the City, and then it does require a great deal to make them even tolerable."

"But could not somebody die, and leave us a large fortune?" exclaimed the other.

"Somebody certainly might: but I do not see much probability that any body will," said her sister.

"At all events, I shall be very glad when I am out," continued Georgiana. "Mamma must then allow me something better than this eternal straw bonnet and green veil."

"If I may judge by my sisters, we shall have worse miseries to bear," said Isabella, "than only an old straw bonnet and a green veil. I should detest every new bonnet that had a design in it. Why, Louisa's pretty violet velvet was only bought because mamma said she must have something to look decent in, as she met Sir Henry Calthorpe on the Parade every day."

“And poor Mary,” continued Georgiana, “lost her afternoon drive because she had nothing fit to be seen in.”

“Poor Mary,” added her sister, “who needs the drive more than any of us. But mamma has long since given up Mary’s case as hopeless.”

“And yet she is but just three and twenty,” said Georgiana. “But she is always so pale and so quiet.”

“So heartbroken, you might say,” exclaimed Isabella, in a tone of deep feeling. “But what would mamma say, if she knew that Louisa had refused Sir Henry?”

“Oh! I hope she will not know it,” cried Georgiana, looking quite aghast. “She would be angry with us all round, and I do not think that she would ever speak to Louisa again. I wonder, though, that Louisa should refuse him!”

“So do not I,” answered Isabella, with a suppressed smile.

At this moment the Brighton coach passed rapidly along.

“I wish I were in that coach,” exclaimed Georgiana, who shivered with the cold rain, which now fell heavily.

“It is well mamma does not hear you,” cried her sister, laughing. “Lady Anne Granard’s daughter in a stage—and there by her own wish — though you are her favourite, she would disclaim you for her child—or, no; she would say that I put it into your head. But I think that we might manage this old cloak bet-

ter—the rain beats on your side ; you know that you are not half such a good contriver as I am.”

And, under the appearance of making a better arrangement of their scanty wrappings, Isabella contrived to give her sister the benefit of nearly all her own.

While this conversation was going on outside the carriage, one much more interrupted was kept up within. Muffled in furs from head to foot, occupying at least half the carriage with herself and her Blenheim, who accompanied every movement of his companion with a shrill cross bark, Lady Anne Granard had at least not neglected her own comfort. Though she had five daughters, she would not for the world have had any thing but a chariot ; so the two girls were left to manage as well as they could, having, moreover, to take especial care not to disarrange any of Lady Anne's numerous packages.

Of course, she could only travel with four horses ; and, to patch up a sort of union between show and economy, the carriage was loaded to the last extremity. The two younger girls were in the rumble, the French maid and page on the coachbox, and Lady Anne and her three eldest daughters inside, to say nothing of imperials, boxes, parcels, and last, but not least, the dog, the only over-petted and over-fed thing in his mistress's possession.

“Never were any girls so stupid as you are,” exclaimed Lady Anne, when, after many vain attempts at conversation, her daughters had sunk into silence.

“Mary never has any thing to say ; and I think you are all growing like her. Do take care, Louisa ; if you lean back, you will spoil your bonnet.”

Louisa started from her reverie, colouring a little deeper than there seemed any occasion for, and said,

“Indeed, mamma, I should be very sorry to spoil your pretty present.”

“I am sure it has been quite thrown away,” interrupted her mother. “I would never have gone to the expense of such a bonnet, had I not thought that Sir Henry Calthorpe was serious in his attentions ; but it is all your own fault.”

“Nay, mamma,” said Helen, timidly, “Louisa could not force Sir Henry to make her an offer.”

“Force, indeed ! — what strange words you use !” interrupted Lady Anne ; “have I not told you a hundred times, that a strong expression is so unladylike ? I dare say it was something Louisa said that frightened Sir Henry away—she must have been to blame.”

And again her ladyship sank back in the carriage. Silence, however, again became wearisome, and she continued.

“I expect that I shall have you all on my hands, like Mary, who never will go off now. I am sure she need not grow so thin and pale, unless she liked it.” The tears came into poor Mary’s eyes, and she turned aside to the window. A thick mist covered the fields, but the prospect was not more dreary than her own—it was obscure, colourless—and such she felt was her future.

“I never knew any thing so provoking as it was of Mr. Glentworth to die ; but I always heard,” continued her ladyship, “that he was a very low person ; and what can you expect from those sort of people ? If he had had any consideration, he would have lived till after Christmas.”

Her daughters thought that the matter did not rest with Mr. Glentworth to consider about ; but Lady Anne Granard’s daughters had many thoughts that they were in the habit of keeping to themselves.

“There is nothing to be done in London just now,” continued Lady Anne. “If we could have staid in Brighton, I think, Louisa, there would still have been a chance of your securing Sir Henry. Yesterday he showed symptoms of returning.” Even now Louisa trembled to think how much she had dreaded that returning.

“Perhaps you may meet him,” continued her mother, “next season. But even if you do, the chances are greatly against you. The first impression, which is of the greatest importance, will be gone off—very likely he may be taken up with some one else.” Louisa secretly wished that he might.

“Besides, in Brighton he saw you every day ; in London you can only meet now and then. If any one desirable comes in the way, the chance of Sir Henry must not be allowed to interfere. I would therefore advise you, Louisa, not to think much about him.” Louisa could very safely promise that she would not.

“ You must remember,” added her mother, “ that the next will be your second season. You did not come out till late, that you might not interfere with Mary. Yet there she is still on my hands, and looking as pale as a ghost. I am in a dreadful fright lest you should go off, as she did, about two and twenty ; and what I shall do with you then, Heaven knows !”

Appalled with the awful prospect of two daughters unmarried at past two and twenty, Lady Anne sank back in the carriage, as much overcome as she could be by any emotion. The silence was broken by Helen’s exclaiming—

“ Well, I am glad of our return to London for one reason—we shall see the Palmers again.”

“ What you can all see to like in those odious Palmers,” cried her ladyship, disdain and dignity mingled in her attitude, “ I cannot conceive.”

“ Dearest mamma,” said Helen, “ only think how kind Mrs. Palmer was when we had the fever !”

“ Oh, yes ; she is the only sort of person for a nurse. She always,” cried Lady Anne, with a sneer, “ comes to you with a receipt for a pudding in one hand to make you ill, and then a prescription in the other to cure you.”

Helen, whose chief ideas of comfort and kindness were taken from the Palmers, said nothing : as wise a plan as can well be pursued in all cases of domestic disagreement.

The faint line of light that trembles on the dusky

horizon of London now became visible, the road soon became a street, the wilderness of houses closed round them, and the whole party sank into silence. Lady Anne was too cross to talk, Mary was sad with that weight which was perpetual at her heart, and Helen was quite tired. Louisa was secretly the best satisfied of the party, for Louisa was in love ; and, though the chances of seeing him were small, yet it was something even to be in the same place with the object of her affection.

Tired, cold, and hungry, the whole party arrived in Welbeck Street. Lady Anne at once retired to her bedroom, the only room in the house where a good fire had been kept up all day. The page was sent for some soup to a confectioner's, and, as soon as it could be made ready, some grilled chicken was carried up on a tray. She had a glass of warm sherry and water, and, with her arm-chair, and a large shawl, her ladyship managed to be tolerably comfortable.

The girls, in the meantime, were crowding in the back parlour over a small, smoky grate, where they had some difficulty in getting the fire to burn at all, each having cast a wistful glance at the cheerful-looking windows of their opposite neighbours.

While they are waiting for their small allowance of mutton chops, and making that superfluous exertion which, in common parlance, is called keeping the fire warm, we will go a little back upon our story. The giant laid down one of the first principles of narrative

when he said, “*Belier, mon ami, commencez au commencement.*”

Lady Anne Granard was the only daughter of the Earl of Rotheles, whose house was one of the most ancient in the west of England. I do not know whether they quite went the lengths of the Castilian genealogy which mentions as a slight episode, “about this time the world was created.” Certainly the house of Rotheles went back to a most glorious obscurity of land-chiefs and sea-kings, the noblest mixture of robbers and pirates that ever entitled descendants to be proud of their origin.

The family property was large, but so heavily mortgaged, that ready money realised Wordsworth’s description of the cuckoo; it was

“ a fear, a hope;
Talked of, but never seen.”

From her childhood Lady Anne had been impressed with that first duty of a portionless beauty—the necessity of making a good match.

Speculations in trade are not confined to the counter or to the counting-house. Lady Anne’s fair hair and white teeth were as much objects of barter as any of the shawls or ribbons displayed in Bond Street. They were to be had in exchange for a suit of diamonds and an opera-box.

Mr. Granard, of Granard Park, became the fortunate purchaser. For five years every thing went on exceedingly well, excepting that every year a daughter

made its appearance, a fact which astonished no one so much as it did Lady Anne herself, for, as she admitted with equal surprise and candour, "it was so like common people to have a large family." Moreover, it was a son they wanted, as a male heir was necessary before any settlement could be made of the property.

Mr. Granard (it is amazing how unreasonable husbands are !) began to hint that they were living beyond their income. Two of the children died, an affliction under which Lady Anne was wonderfully supported, particularly as her spirits under such circumstances required a little change, and they accordingly passed a few months at Paris.

Twelve years glided by, only disturbed by remonstrances from Mr. Granard, remonstrances which, as her ladyship observed, always came after he had been seeing his steward or his lawyer — for her part, she hated those sort of people. Two more daughters were also added to their stock of domestic felicity, and the eldest, a pretty, fair, timid girl, had become the constant companion of her father's solitary walks, who took little part in the gaieties which filled his house.

Mr. Granard's is a common history. He was a broken-spirited man, ruined by extravagance he had not resolution to check, and harassed by embarrassments he had not courage to face. He was a kind-hearted, well-meaning man, and with a different wife would have been a different person. He had married

Lady Anne not only for her beauty, but for her quiet manner, which he mistook for gentleness — like many others, he found out his mistake when too late. Shy, sensitive, and indolent, he gave way on every point, because it was less trouble to yield than to oppose. He went to London, though he would have preferred remaining in the country; he gave a grand fête of some description or other every year, though he hated the noise and confusion; he filled his house with company, though his habits were even unsocial: in short, his whole life was one succession of sacrifices, but they were sacrifices without merit—they were the sacrifices of weakness, not of strength. Many a bitter moment did he pass, when, after watching his five fairy girls on the lawn, he would turn away, and think that his death would leave them beggars. There was one sad thought perpetually fretting his heart, and the gay and lovely Lady Anne Granard was often pitied for being united to a man so gloomy and so unsocial.

Mr. Granard became a valetudinarian; he was always applying to some physician or another, perhaps a little to their bewilderment, for no disease was apparent: they knew not that the improvident father feared to die, for the sake of five destitute orphans. In the mean time he grew thin and pale, the result, it was said, of over-attention. “Never,” as his wife observed, “did any body take such care of himself as Mr. Granard.”

But there was that within which mocked all cure,

and Lady Anne was in the midst of her arrangements for an archery meeting, when Mr. Granard was found dead in his library. He had not been in bed all night, having been looking over accounts; a half sketched plan of retrenchment was found near, but that night his life was required of him.

Lady Anne could not repress one involuntary exclamation of "what an inconvenient time Mr. Granard had chosen for his death!" but otherwise she behaved with exemplary propriety. She retired to her dressing-room, which was duly darkened, and there she sat, a white cambric handkerchief in one hand, and a bottle of salts in the other.

Most of Mr. Granard's children were too young to feel his loss, but Mary, the eldest, grieved for him with a grief beyond her years. What were his faults to her? she only knew him as the kind father with whom she read and walked, and from whom she never heard an unkind word. In after years, when she heard of his indolence and his improvidence, it sounded to her like sacrilege.

CHAPTER II.

A far worse shock than her husband's death awaited Lady Anne. It was the arrival of the next heir at Granard Park, and the information that her husband had died totally ruined, while a poor five hundred a year was all that remained for the support of herself and her daughters.

Lady Anne was more eloquent than she had ever before been on the subject of Mr. Granard's imprudence. "What did people mean by having heirs-at-law? Why were she and her children to be impoverished for a stranger?"

She wrote to her brother, Lord Rotheles, expecting that he would set the matter right. This, however, was out of his power—still he did something for her; he assured her of an allowance of five hundred a year, mentioning also that she could stay at Rotheles Castle as long as she pleased.

This Lady Anne resolved to do till his and Lady Rotheles's return. After that it would be impossible, for his lordship had married the woman who had been divorced on his account, and, whatever Lady Anne's other faults might be, she was rigidly correct. Too

cold to feel, too inanimate to flirt, not a shadow had ever passed over the highly polished surface of Lady Anne's propriety.

The death of Lord Rotheles's third wife, (he had himself been divorced by his second) opened a transitory vision of splendour before the eyes of Lady Anne. Her brother would of course return from Paris, she could preside over his entertainments; and how serviceable they might be made to what was now the great object of her existence — having her daughters well married!

“Thank God,” she would sometimes exclaim, “my girls all promise to be pretty! I can conceive no misfortune in life so great as having a plain daughter to introduce.”

All Lady Anne's plans about her brother's house were, however, nipped in the bud, by his marrying again.

Dr. Johnson says that a second marriage is the triumph of hope over experience: what he would have said of a third and a fourth I know not, unless he set it down as a case of incurable madness.

The fourth Lady Rotheles was a very different person from her predecessors; she was as little like the romantic and disappointed second, as she was like the impassioned and miserable third. It was a surprise and a novelty to Lord Rotheles to have a wife without tears or reproaches—he really quite missed them.

His wife and sister had too many points of resem-

blance, not to entertain a strong and mutual dislike. Our own faults are those we are the first to detect, and the last to forgive, in others. Lady Rotheles and Lady Anne were two worldly, cold-hearted women ; but Lady Rotheles was the stronger minded. They soon came into direct collision.

The autumn after Mary had been presented, they were asked on a visit to Rotheles Castle. This invitation Lady Anne accepted entirely on her daughter's account.

“Mary's style of beauty,” as she justly observed, “is the very sort of thing to tell in a country house ; she looks so fresh, and yet so delicate at breakfast. London does not do for her, she is lost in a crowd, and one week of late hours makes her not fit to be seen.”

To Rotheles Castle they went ; and Lady Anne saw every cause to congratulate herself on her judgment, when she also saw Lord Allerton paying Mary the most devoted attention. Lord Allerton was that modern phoenix, a young man, without a single objection. For the daughter he was young, handsome, agreeable, and very much in love ; for the mother he was rich, and highly connected. There was apparently neither fault nor obstacle, and Mary yielded to a happiness which gave a deeper light to her soft blue eyes, and a richer colour to her delicate cheek. Even Lady Anne wondered that she had never thought Mary beautiful before.

But, as the old ballad says, summing up, in one verse, the whole philosophy of human existence—

“Every fair has its black,
Every sweet has its sour;
So found the ladye Christabelle
In an untimely hour.”

But Lady Rotheles had been forgotten, in the whole business—a fact her ladyship was not likely to overlook. To be sure, it was no concern of hers; she had nevertheless resolved to make it one. The mere satisfaction of disappointing Lady Anne would have been quite sufficient; but she had also another motive; she had decided that Lord Allerton should marry her niece. To most others Lord Allerton's obvious preference for Mary would have been an insuperable obstacle; it only served to stimulate her ladyship.

Poor Mary's feelings, or poor Mary's happiness, were as little considered as they were by her mother. With both ladies love was not a sentiment, but a speculation. Lady Anne wanted her daughter provided for; Lady Rotheles wanted her niece.

“I must say, my dear aunt,” exclaimed Henrietta Aubrey, “you do not do your duty by me. I was a thousand times more useful to you, when the possession of Lord Rotheles was still debatable ground in Paris. Think how I did your ‘spiriting gently’—above all, made ‘no mistakings.’”

“I explained to you at the time,” replied Lady

Rotheles, "that my marriage would be for your interest as much as my own."

"One part of the explanation," rejoined Henrietta, "has, at all events, proved true."

"Your part is not less certain," answered Lady Rotheles, "provided you follow my advice."

So saying, she closed a large volume bound in calf-skin, whose accounts she had been diligently studying, and, sinking back in her arm-chair, took that comfortable position which people are apt to assume when they intend giving advice at considerable length.

There are a great many theories afloat touching the manner in which the character of an individual reveals itself. Some contend that it sets its mark on the countenance; this might be true, for Lady Rotheles's face was sufficiently indicative of the inner world. Her features good, but sharp; her eyes bright, but too small—the forehead high and narrow, while the lip was thin and compressed. Others again contend that the handwriting betrays more than any thing else; and this also might have received confirmation, for her ladyship's handwriting was fine, angular, and not very legible. But nothing more indicates those tastes and habits which go so far towards both making and showing the character—as a person's sitting-room, particularly that half dressing-room, half boudoir, which is peculiarly feminine property.

Lady Rotheles had fitted up her chamber herself, and a large, handsome-looking room it was; but a

nice examination showed that the colours did not harmonize, and that some of the furniture was scarcely in keeping with the rest. Her ladyship carried her love of buying bargains to its utmost extent; and, moreover, she always looked forward. She preferred that Lord Rotheles's liberality should take a purely personal direction. Whatever decorations might be lavished upon her dressing-room, the dowager would have to leave them behind her; not so those which filled the prodigality of red morocco cases on her toilette. Often did she think, with a sigh, that the family diamonds were only hers for a brief and brilliant period; still, it was some comfort to remember the chains, bracelets, rings, &c., that would remain "mine and mine only."

There were neither flowers, engravings, nor music, scattered about, and but few books. These volumes were all of a useful character. There was "Cobbett's Cottage Economy," divers cookery books, with the leaf turned down at receipts for making cheap soup for the poor; and on the table was a large bale of coarse flannel, and some common dark prints.

There was always, in Lady Rotheles's mind, a contest going on between parsimony and power. However, they soon came to an arrangement. With what was peculiarly her own, the countess was even mean; with what belonged to her husband she was just, almost generous; she was respected by the neighbourhood, if not beloved. The poor are very unreasonable; a kind

look and word often go farther in winning upon their affection than even a piece of coarse flannel, or a remnant of dark print.

Henrietta, her niece, looked much prettier than she really was ; she had good dark eyes, to which a *souçon* of *rouge*, put on with such skill that few suspected it, gave all possible brightness. Her figure was tall and slight, and she dressed to perfection. Henrietta had not spent some years in Paris for nothing ; she was a remarkable instance of how much we may do ourselves for our personal appearance. If human beauty be a flower, as all poets and philosophers assert that it is, a great deal may be done for flowers by judicious cultivation.

CHAPTER III.

“ Indeed, my dear aunt, I must impress upon you how completely profitless is my present visit,” said Miss Aubrey ; “ there is not a man in the house with a serious thought.”

“ Think for a moment,” replied the Countess.

“ Oh !” exclaimed her niece, “ you are not going to recommend General Trevor, who has a constitution like that of France, which requires perpetual patching, and who would expect me to spend half the year at Cheltenham.”

“ General Trevor,” returned her ladyship, gravely, “ would be a desperate resource. I do not think we are driven to such yet. But—not to waste time—what do you think of Lord Allerton ?”

“ Think !” ejaculated Henrietta, “ that he has neither eyes nor ears for any one but Mary Granard. I do not think that he would know me, if he met me out of the house.”

“ You will come the more freshly upon him when he does observe you,” said Lady Rotheles.

“ I am sure,” replied Miss Aubrey, looking sullenly

down, "Lord Allerton is a far more desperate resource than General Trevor."

"If you have any fancy for the General, you can try him first," retorted the Countess. Henrietta's sole reply was to raise her hands and eyes with an expression of dismay. "But I have," continued Lady Rotheles, "quite decided that you shall be Lady Allerton. I could not endure to have one of that odious Lady Anne's daughters for my nearest neighbour. I was enraged when I found that Rotheles had asked them down. But never was there a man so ill educated—his three first wives have completely spoilt him. But he is beginning a new and more rational system—he now finds the necessity of consulting his wife a little. However, in the present instance, it has been all for the best."

"For the best!" cried Miss Aubrey; "that I should find the ground preoccupied!"

"Yes," replied her aunt, "considering the character of the man. It will be far easier to make him fall in love a second time than a first. It was worth a great deal to make the bare idea of his being married possible and familiar to him."

"Very good, had it been with myself," returned Henrietta.

"*Le bon tems viendra*," said the Countess. "Lord Allerton is that almost impossibility to manage—a young man who has been a good match from his cradle. He looks upon himself as the point of attack to

every mamma and daughter who come within ear or eyeshot. His love for Mary Granard has taken him quite by surprise, and he is still reluctant and suspicious of so novel a feeling. Once let his attention be drawn to Lady Anne's manœuvres, and once let him suppose that Mary is a party to them, and the game is in our own hands."

"But how," asked Miss Aubrey, anxiously, "is this to be effected?"

"I have already settled the whole plan," and Lady Rotheles proceeded to detail her ingenious and heartless scheme.

"Poor Mary!" was the involuntary exclamation of her rival. Lady Rotheles looked first amazed, and then scornful.

"Pray," said she, "keep any thing like sentiment for Allerton. I am not the least afraid that you will have too much. But one thing I beg to observe—I shall expect active co-operation on your part. You are clever enough if you exert yourself, and that is what people usually do when it is for themselves."

"But," continued Henrietta, "though Lord Allerton's affection may be diverted from Mary Granard, I do not understand why it should turn towards me."

"Because," replied her aunt, "he will need an object, and you are the only other girl in the house. A young man in love passes his time very pleasantly—rouse him from the dream, and, for a while, he does not know what to do with himself. He wants an

object; and you, Henrietta, are just at hand to be that object.”

“ ‘ Loving goes by haps ;
Some Cupids kill with arrows, some with traps ; ’ ”

muttered Miss Aubrey.

“ The character you assume,” continued Lady Rotheles, not heeding the interruption, “ must be completely in opposition to that to which his attention is at present directed. Mary is tame, meek, spiritless—you must, therefore, be lively, quick, and piquante. Fortunately, your Parisian tournure will save your vivacity from vulgarity. Though, I must say, not one English girl in a thousand is to be trusted out of the security of insipidity; but you are French enough to be animated without being pert. Moreover, I do not think it necessary that you should disguise your preference for Lord Allerton.”

“ I should be clever,” thought Henrietta, “ to disguise what does not exist.”

But all that she deemed it necessary to express of her secret thoughts was her sense of her aunt’s kindness, and, above all, of her aunt’s talents. This tribute was graciously received, for Lady Rotheles was a Catherine de Medicis on a small scale. She delighted in schemes and in projects; she governed her husband by a series of manœuvres, whose only fault was their being entirely wasted; as a simple wish, openly expressed, would have answered every purpose. She

delighted both in her own affairs and those of her neighbours ; and, though she could not, like the royal *intriguante*, sacrifice the lives of others, she scrupled not at the chief sacrifice of domestic despotism—she sacrificed their feelings.

Lady Anne Granard was seated in an arm-chair, by an open window — it was her favourite place, for it commanded the sweep up to the house, and she saw every carriage as it drove round. Unconscious of her near vicinity, Lord Allerton was outside, on the terrace, employed in taking a view of a particular turn in the road, which Lady Rotheles had pointed out as peculiarly well adapted for a sketch. He was looking one way, and Lady Anne was looking the opposite. Moreover, a large orange-tree was a complete screen between them. Still, had they been aware of each other's presence, they might have carried on a conversation, which would have been mutually agreeable ; for Lady Anne, though convinced of her own pleasant company, was always ready to bestow it on any one rather than herself—it was her only act of disinterested kindness—the only thing in the world that she was ever ready to give.

Lord Allerton was beginning to get tired of drawing, with no one to admire the freedom of his outline and the beauty of his tints ; but, though fated to take an important part in Lady Anne's conversation that morning, it was only in the subordinate character of listener.

“Do you know where Miss Granard is?” said Henrietta. “I have just finished sorting the costumes in my dressing-room, which she so much wished to see.”

“She told me,” thought Lord Allerton, “that her mother wanted her particularly.”

“Oh, pray do not,” said Lady Anne, “show them to her this morning. Mary is walking in the cypress grove. Poor dear Mr. Granard gave her some very bad habits; and I find that, as they are past cure, I must give way to them; for, quiet as she seems, Mary has a will of her own.”

Now the bad habits to which Lady Anne alluded were only those of air and exercise; but, not stating what they might be, Lord Allerton had full opportunity to exercise his imagination concerning them.

“I do not feel inclined to walk,” said Henrietta, “so will wait till she returns.”

“She is to walk one hour,” replied Lady Anne; “it is for the sake of her complexion. It is necessary to keep it up, though her’s is just the sort of skin on which a touch of rouge would never be suspected.”

“Miss Granard has a lovely colour,” continued Miss Aubrey.

“Yes,” replied her mother; “and that is the reason why I always make her go down to breakfast. Moreover, Lord Allerton is an early riser, and of course he is our first object.”

“No wonder,” added her companion, “that Lord

Allerton should admire Miss Granard, beautiful as she is."

"It is very fortunate," said Lady Anne, "for it will save me a world of trouble. Lord Allerton is quite unobjectionable. True, the peerage is modern; but Rotheles told me that there is not a mortgage on the estate."

"And then," exclaimed Henrietta, "Lord Allerton is so handsome, I quite understand Miss Granard's falling in love with him."

"In love!" cried Lady Anne, with every possible expression of scorn and surprise in her voice; "I beg that you will put no such nonsense into my daughter's head; and, I must say, that the sooner you put it out of your own the better."

"To love a man like Lord Allerton," interrupted Miss Aubrey, "does not seem to me nonsense; but, if Mary does not love him, what does she marry him for?"

"Why, what does a girl marry for?" cried her ladyship. "Mary marries for rank, independence—and because she well knows that she has not a shilling in the world."

"I would not marry the man whom I did not love," ejaculated Miss Aubrey, "for any earthly consideration."

"I hope you will not be silly enough to say this to Mary; not that it much matters. She knows that she is to be Lady Allerton. It was only last night," con-

tinued Lady Anne, "that we were talking of her wedding-dresses."

"Are they to be very splendid?" asked Henrietta.

"Oh no," returned her companion; "simple and elegant. Fortunately, Mary's style suits simplicity. I cannot afford much expense—when she is Lady Allerton, she can be as extravagant as she pleases."

A short pause ensued in the conversation, which was broken by Miss Aubrey saying, "I was so much interested, yesterday, at dinner, with Lord Allerton's account of the cottages that he is building! I do not wonder that a man of his wealth should prefer living in the country, where he may do so much good, and be so beloved. Then the country in England is beautiful."

Lady Anne looked at the speaker with equal surprise and scorn. "I cannot," interrupted her ladyship, "be too thankful that Mary has none of your nonsensical notions—doing good, and the beauties of the country!—what moral essay have you been reading this morning? But Mary knows what she marries Lord Allerton for."

"And," asked Henrietta, "what does she marry Lord Allerton for?"

"She marries him," replied Lady Anne, slowly, even solemnly, "for a house in town, an opera-box, and a diamond necklace."

"Three most unanswerable reasons," exclaimed Henrietta, in the most scornful tone she could assume.

The entrance of some visitors interrupted the conversation, and they left the window.

Lord Allerton drew a deep breath, and put up his sketch. "And so," muttered he, "the sweet, simple, and quiet Mary marries me for a house in town, an opera-box, and a diamond necklace." He sauntered on in a reverie, divided between the remembrance of Miss Granard's soft blue eyes, and Miss Aubrey's sweet and soft expression of feeling. The time past away, and, as he returned to the house, he was met by Lady Rotheles.

"What," exclaimed she, "loitering about! I suppose I must not ask for my drawing." Lord Allerton said something about the fineness of the morning having tempted him to walk.

"Well," replied the Countess, "there is a fatality about to-day; nobody does what they intended to do. We meant to have driven over to the Priory this morning, but Lady Anne and Mary have just declared off."

"Why?" asked his lordship, who remembered that the Priory had been the chief subject of his and Miss Granard's conversation, the previous evening. He thought that his description of the beautiful old ruins had interested her to the last degree, to say nothing of the view they commanded of his own hanging woods.

"The Duke of Evandale," replied Lady Rotheles, "has just sent a courier to announce his intention of staying here to-night, on his way to the North; and Mary Granard having walked during the morning for

her complexion, will now stay in the house the rest of the day to preserve it. A rich bachelor duke does not come in the way often."

"But," exclaimed Lord Allerton, "the Duke is upwards of sixty; and a man whose notorious character..."

"My dear young friend," interrupted Lady Rotheles, laughing, "to think how we may be deceived by appearances. I always took you for an unusually shrewd and sensible person. This is no flattery, for I find that I was quite mistaken; for who, with the least observation, but must know that age and character form no part of the matrimonial calculations of a girl brought up as Mary Granard has been. But I see my gardener waiting, and must let you escape without further inquiries about my unfinished sketch."

She turned away, and Lord Allerton walked rapidly towards the stables. A few moments, and he was galloping rapidly across the park, exclaiming, almost aloud, in the energy of his gratitude, "Thank Heaven, I have not committed myself by a declaration!"

CHAPTER IV.

The dinner at the Castle was even gayer than usual. The party was small, but so much the better ; the circle came more under the immediate influence of the hostess, and no one could be more agreeable than Lady Rotheles when she chose.

The duke, though upwards of sixty, was an agreeable man of the world ; and Mary Granard was too young and lovely not to attract a professed admirer of beauty.

Lord Allerton was seated next Miss Aubrey, who gave him sweet words and sweeter looks. Henrietta had seen much of society, and was a lively and pleasant talker ; her companion wanted to be amused, and was almost surprised to find conversation so easy. He was, more than he would himself have allowed, under the influence of pique, and this gave its own charm to whatever was the most opposed to Mary Granard. Once he caught sight, as the gold racing-cups were being moved, of Mary's face ; it was turned towards the duke with an expression of interest, and a smile the sweeter for its very timidity.

His grace piqued himself on always being able to

fascinate ; and, hitherto, the silence of his pretty companion had been any thing but flattering to his vanity ; but, in one of his many attempts at conversation, he chanced to mention the part of the country in which Granard Park was situated ; and Mary could never resist an inquiry about the dear old place. The duke immediately remembered much more than he had observed.

At that moment the gold cups were moved, and Lord Allerton looked towards them. Small things are the hinges on which great events turn ! When we trace to their source the most important circumstances of our life, in what trifles have they originated !—a look, a word, are the ministers of fate.

Poor Mary found the dinner very long, but the evening was yet longer ; the duke resumed his place at her side, and Lord Allerton took his by Miss Aubrey. Henrietta was looking her best, and was in brilliant spirits, and her companion was surprised to find how much he was entertained.

A still more agreeable surprise awaited him ; he was passionately fond of music, and he found that Henrietta sang. Overdone as he had been with singing young ladies, it appeared to him a most astonishing fact, that he could have lived for a week in the house with a girl possessing such an accomplishment, who had not produced it for his especial benefit.

Henrietta was a first-rate musician, and it was extraordinary how their taste coincided ; she sang all his

favourite songs—they were her favourites also. He was not aware how carefully Lady Rotheles had noted his preference, and that Henrietta had the list by heart.

That night poor Mary sought her pillow with a pale cheek and a tearful eye, and that night was but the herald of many others. His caution aroused, though in the wrong quarter; his vanity flattered, and his evenings amused, Lord Allerton gave in to the snare with a readiness beyond even their most sanguine hopes. A few day's neglect made Mary shrink from even speaking to him—a shyness increased by her mother's reproaches.

As soon as the duke vanished, and gave no sign of being more interested in Miss Granard than in the thousand and one pretty girls that were daily forced upon his notice, Lady Anne referred to Lord Allerton. To her great surprise, she found him completely engrossed with Miss Aubrey, who immediately became with her “that odious and artful girl.” Moreover, she declared it was all Mary's fault, and tortured her with perpetual wonder as to what could be the cause.

Mary, diffident of herself to the last degree, could only set it down to Henrietta's superior charms; but bitter within her was the wonder at such change. True, Lord Allerton had not committed himself by a positive declaration; but how often had he conveyed, by a look or by a word, that she was beloved! Mary had been too happy to look forward; for the first time since her poor father's death, she had felt loved and valued. It

was so sweet to be cared for—love with her took even a tenderer tone from gratitude.

Mary's was the very nature to put forth all its strength and beauty under the fostering influence of affection — she was a delicate flower that needed sunshine to unfold its brightest colours, and bring forth its sweetest breath. She had been living in a fairy world, which her own heart supplied with poetry. The least selfish of human beings, the advantages of a union with Lord Allerton had never crossed her mind, unless it were to think of how delightful it would be to have her sisters staying with her.

But all this hope and happiness passed away like a dream. With no fault of which she was conscious, no cause which she could even imagine, she saw his attentions suddenly transferred to another. Mary could only remember all she had ever heard of inconstancy, and repeat, night after night, the same exclamation, "I am very unhappy — oh! that I had never seen him!" To yield sadly and submissively seemed all that she could do.

Her rival, Henrietta, would not have yielded so unresistingly; but Henrietta was artful, decided, and selfish. It is a strange thing, but true nevertheless, that a lover is most easily influenced by the woman who does not care for him. She is disturbed by no fears or doubts; fretted by no jealousies, she is ready to flatter, and collected enough to observe when and where the flattery will tell. Having no feelings of her

own to control, she is better able to note his, and take her course accordingly.

Henrietta had nothing to interfere with keeping a perpetual watch over Lord Allerton ; she had neither timidity nor scruples ; and she had that sort of ready talent which makes a capital actress. Nature had meant Henrietta to be something better than society had made her. She had loved—loved with all the intenseness of an impassioned nature. Had that attachment been more fortunate, she would have been a different creature ; but her sweetest and best feelings had been excited to gratify the lowest of all vanities, and then neglected as carelessly as they had been called forth. The iron had entered into her soul, and left its own harshness behind. She looked upon marriage in that light which it is as fatal to a woman's delicacy as to her happiness to consider it—merely as an establishment.

Mary's soft eyes, filled with unbidden tears, more than once excited a feeling as like remorse as she was now capable of experiencing ; but it was deadened, if not dissipated, by the idea of being mistress of Allerton Park on one hand, and being left still dependant on her worldly aunt, who would visit upon her the failure of their scheme.

“I have been thinking,” said Lord Rotheles to his wife, as she came into the library with some letters to be franked, “that Allerton has been trifling with Mary.”

“I think,” interrupted the countess, “that he is something of a flirt; but if he is trifling with any body, it is with Henrietta.”

“Why!” exclaimed Rotheles, “Lady Anne told me——”

“Spare me,” cried his wife, “the repetition of Lady Anne’s sayings. The fact is, her speculation on the duke having failed, Lord Allerton comes in as next desirable, and fancies that if you tell him to marry Miss Granard, he must of course do it. You are master of the house, and can order a husband as easily as a dinner or a drive. You will only make yourself ridiculous by interfering.”

“I believe, my dear, that you are right,” said his lordship, who was rapidly acquiring the laudable habit of taking his wife’s view of any given subject for granted; at all events, it was a process that saved himself a world of trouble.

“There is nothing,” continued Lady Rotheles, “for which I have so great a contempt as for this sort of matrimonial manœuvring. Let things take their own course. But you know how much I dislike interfering in any concerns that are not my own.”

Lord Rotheles did not feel quite convinced by this last assertion. The countess left the library, but stopped for a moment’s consideration as she passed through the hall. “Delays are dangerous,” thought she; “Lord Allerton must make his offer now or never; and unless it be done in a hurry, it will never be done.”

She then took her way to the music-room, where, as she surmised, she found Henrietta at the piano, and Lord Allerton leaning over her.

“Henrietta,” exclaimed she, “do go into my room, and bring me down the little red book; you are the only one I can trust among my papers, and I am too tired to go up stairs.” Away went her obedient niece; and Lord Allerton, a little annoyed at the duet being interrupted, stood turning over some loose music. “It is very provoking,” said the countess, laughing, “that Rotheles is more often right than I am. He is much more quick-sighted in affairs of the heart. I will not tell you all the handsome things that he has been saying about you. Still, Lord Allerton, you have kept me a little too much in the dark, for Henrietta is to me as if she were a child of my own.” Before her marriage, Lady Rotheles would have said, “like a sister.”

At this moment Henrietta returned; her aunt immediately left the room, saying, with a meaning smile, as she closed the door, “I see very well that I am *de trop*; but, Henrietta, you are a sad undutiful girl to let your aunt be the last to find out what every one else in the house knows.”

The result of Lady Rotheles’s system of non-interference showed itself the following day, when she came into the drawing-room, where Lady Anne was placed at her favourite window, and Mary seated at an embroidery frame, pale, silent, and pursuing her work with a sort of sad, mechanical industry.

“Do you know,” said Lady Rotheles, veiling her triumph under an appearance of affectionate interest, “that we shall soon have a wedding here? I really am quite foolish about it, for I am truly fond of Henrietta. Lord Allerton is most fortunate in having secured her affection.”

“Miss Aubrey! impossible!” cried Lady Anne; but she had no time to say more, for Mary had sunk insensible beside the embroidery frame.

“How lucky,” said Lady Rotheles, afterwards, to her niece, “that Allerton was not by to witness such a well-arranged piece of sensibility!”

CHAPTER V.

The drawing-rooms of the house in Welbeck Street were light and pretty looking ; true, there was not much furniture, neither was it of a costly description ; but the colours were cheerful, with a preponderance of pink, and a thousand feminine trifles gave their own grace and gaiety. The ottomans were embroidered, the screens exquisitely painted, the flower-stand carefully tended ; while toys, the result of ingenuity and industry, were scattered prodigally round. No curtains were lined with a more judicious *couleur de rose*, and the general effect left no room for minute criticism, which was moreover disarmed by three or four very pretty faces. No one ever spoke of them but as “ light, elegant rooms.”

The next floor had also cheerfulness and comfort : it had many relics of Granard Park : there was the large arm-chair, the sofa, and the glass à la Psyche. Lady Anne indulged in very late hours. Mr. Granard had noted it in one of his pocket-books as a remarkable fact, that his wife had breakfasted with him three times in his life.

The back bedroom was occupied by her French

lady's-maid, whose office was certainly no sinecure, for Lady Anne required to be waited on in every possible manner. Moreover, though still a remarkably handsome woman, the Lady Anne Granard, the mother of five grown-up daughters, was not the Lady Anne Granard of five and twenty. It was not so easy to suit every shade of ribbon to her complexion; the cap, with its softening shadow of blonde was requisite, and needed also some judicious management.

Of all toilettes, that of autumnal beauty is the most difficult to superintend. The maid lacks credit, the mistress satisfaction; and even flattery loses its charm with the too sincere looking-glass staring you full in the face. Still this said toilette and its preparations occupied great part of the day, though now it was rather a habit than a pleasure. Unless on grand occasions, where some especial object was in view, Fanchette did not wait on the young ladies; and Louisa, for Mary was every day more and more put aside, knew very well that it was never without good and sufficient reason, if, while she was dressing, a rap was heard at the door, and Fanchette came in always with the same message: "Mademoiselle, not but the taste of mademoiselle was si parfaite, but Lady Anne had sent her to do her young lady's hair."

The three attics were occupied by the girls; Mary, in right of her seniority, had the small third room to herself. Though fondly attached to her sisters, the first on every occasion to give up to them, yet there

was less of companionship between her and the others. Their light hopes and fears were in common; they could talk of the past, she could not bear to speak of it. To Mary it was a relief to be alone; Louisa and Isabella occupied the front, Helen and Georgiana the back attic.

One description may serve for all three rooms; they were whitewashed, uncurtained, uncarpeted, and crowded with boxes. The only furniture were the small beds — one obliged to be put directly across the fireplace—a deal table and washing-stand, and two rush-bottomed chairs. At the back they looked out upon the mews; in front had a bird's-eye view of the roofs of the opposite houses over the parapet. It was impossible to imagine anything more cold or comfortless, while it was a task of no small dexterity to thread your way through the labyrinth of trunks, bandboxes, &c.; for it had of late years become a maxim with Lady Anne that nothing ought to be thrown or given away: what the elder sisters left off might turn to account for the younger ones, and, as she justly observed, “till a girl came out, it was of no consequence what she wore.” Good looks, or good clothes, were sheer extravagance till they had been presented.

The dining-room was very narrow; it had been sacrificed to the hall, which was wide and airy. A handsome hall gives at once a handsome appearance to a house, and Lady Anne asked no one to dinner.

The back parlour had been the schoolroom, and certainly never was there a more disconsolate apartment; every thing in it was common, every thing in it was old. The table was usually loaded with work, and work of the most ordinary and useful description; the walls were covered with paper, whose original colour and pattern had long since merged in a dingy brown; over this were hung up some unframed drawings, and some shelves on which were ranged all the old school books, grammars, Pinnock's catechisms, and one or two French novels that had belonged to a former governess. Curtains were considered a superfluity, and a form, with some common chairs, completed the furniture.

The remainder of Lady Anne's establishment consisted of a servant of all work, and a nondescript boy, called a page. Cooking there was as little as possible; and, the young ladies dressing each other, the unfortunate kitchen-maid contrived to get through the week; but, as she often observed on a Sunday to any dropping-in friend, she would not have stayed an hour but for her young mistresses.

In short, the whole of Lady Anne's household was the type of a system—it was false from beginning to end. It aimed at a position in society she lacked the means of retaining; comfort was sacrificed to show; and all the better and more natural emotions merged in vain speculations of aggrandisement. In nothing were the feelings of others consulted; but their opi-

nions were of paramount importance. The world was looked upon as a particular set, out of whose pale there was neither interest nor refinement; the rest were just common people, whom nobody knows. Lady Anne would have been in despair if the Misses Granard had not been allowed at any party to be among the most elegant girls in the room, but she cared as little for their affection as for their comfort.

But her house, with its poverty and its pretence—her daughters, with their accomplishments and privations—presented a picture, a common one, of to-day. There is a mania in every class to be mistaken for what it is not. Many things innocent, nay, even graceful in themselves, become injurious and awkward by unseasonable imitation. We follow, we copy; first comfort goes, and then respectability. A false seeming is mistaken for refinement, and half life is thrown away in worthless sacrifices to a set of hollow idols called appearances.

The girls were crowded round the fireplace, silent and shivering, when the page made his appearance. “If you please, miss,” said he, addressing any one whose eye he might first happen to catch, “Mrs. Palmer has sent over her servant to ask if the young ladies could come and drink tea with her. She is quite alone, and it would be a real charity.” The eyes of the little circle brightened.

“How kind!” cried Isabella.

“I wonder if mamma will let us go,” said Helen, timidly.

“ I will run upstairs and ask her,” cried Georgiana.
“ I manage her better than any of you.”

“ What do you want, child ?” asked Lady Anne, pettishly, who was listening to the news that her French maid had already collected of the neighbourhood.

“ Oh, mamma,” replied Georgiana, “ we are all getting chilblains with sitting in that cold parlour, and—”

“ Why do you not wear your gloves ?” interrupted Lady Anne. “ I shall disown you for my child if you have red hands.”

“ No, no, mamma ; you know that we all take after you, and never were there such pretty little white hands in the world. But, mamma, I came to tell you that Mrs. Palmer has sent to ask us to tea ; do let us go.”

“ I wonder how you can bear that odious woman’s manners,” returned her mother ; “ I expect that you will all grow like her in time. But it is of no use my saying anything ; you will go if you chuse.”

“ Oh, thank you, mamma,” cried Georgiana, not chusing to hear any more, and down stairs she ran to communicate the permission.

“ I knew she would let us go,” cried Georgiana, “ when I praised her little white hands.”

“ Oh, Georgiana,” cried Helen, colouring, “ how can you flatter mamma as you do ! It is very wrong.”

Poor Georgiana stood silent and abashed. When

her sister took her hand, and said, "But we know very well that you did it to let us go — do not be angry" — all unkindly feeling dissolved at the first word, and the two girls kissed each other with an affection, perhaps the more tender for such slight difference.

"We must not," said Isabella, "keep Mrs. Palmer waiting tea for us."

The little party took the hint, and all prepared with shawl and bonnet, excepting Mary and Louisa, both of whom pleaded fatigue. Both wished to be silent, though from different causes. Every day Mary felt more and more disinclined to exertion, and Louisa had a heart filled with those sweet fancies, over which we delight to muse alone. She was expecting just a few lines of welcome — one of those letters which we are fain to read by ourselves, and whose charm belongs to the loveliest dream that haunts even youth.

Helen, Georgiana, and Isabella, soon crossed the street, ran up stairs, without waiting to be announced, and found themselves in Mrs. Palmer's drawing-room. It was a complete contrast to the back parlour they had just left. The fire blazed, and the red curtains excluded every breath of the damp night air. Sofa and chairs were drawn towards the fireside, and Mrs. Palmer was already seated at a tea-table loaded with cakes, toast, and preserves. The kettle was singing on the side, and a thin white column of smoke announced, that desideratum of tea-makers, that the water boiled at a gallop.

The kind old lady rose with a little of assumption of dignity, which lasted till each of the blooming girls came up in her turn to be kissed. The eldest duly kissed first.

“How well you are all looking!” exclaimed she; “nothing like the country for girls, as I always used to say at Claver House. Come, take your places. Helen, you shall pour out the coffee. Georgiana, give me the water, and Isabella, you can hand the muffins. I always make young people useful.” All gladly drew round the table, and Mrs. Palmer’s exhortation of “Poor dears, do enjoy yourselves,” was fulfilled, even to her own satisfaction.

“Palm,” said she, “is gone to dine at his club, they meet once a month, and he never misses. They say clubs make men very unsociable, but I don’t think so. I am sure Palm always comes home in the best of humours, and the next day he has lots of news. Bless me, he brought home from the last dinner two marriages, four christenings, and one death, no, not quite, for old Mr. Clumber did not die, his life was only despaired of.”

“I wish it had been Mr. Glentworth,” said Georgiana.

“Well,” cried Mrs. Palmer, “I cannot be sorry at having you all back again. But what news from Brighton? any of you going to be married? any of you lost your hearts? though I do not know whether it is quite right to talk to girls about their hearts.

However, as we are quite by ourselves, you may as well tell me what conquests you have made."

"Oh, we are not out yet," replied Georgiana, "but Louisa had a new bonnet, in which she made such a conquest! Mamma would go mad if she knew all about it."

"Who was the gentleman?" asked Mrs. Palmer, a little anxiously.

"Oh, Louisa refused him at once," returned Isabella, who caught the look.

"Such a handsome young man!" cried Georgiana, who replied only to the words, "Sir Henry Calthorpe, with plenty of money."

"And why," asked the old lady, "would not Louisa have him?"

"She did not like him," replied Helen.

"Young ladies," returned Mrs. Palmer, with a touch of her former dignified authority, "should not permit themselves to take fancied likings and dislikings."

"Louisa," said Helen, timidly, yet eagerly, "never could have liked any one so vain, so uninteresting as Sir Henry, who made his offer, expecting her to be divided between surprise and gratitude."

"He was one of those men," said Isabella, "who have no separate existence from their tailor, unless, indeed, a portion be claimed by the glover and boot-maker. I should as soon think of marrying a suit of clothes."

“I wonder what,” exclaimed Mrs. Palmer, good-humouredly, “you young ladies would choose, if left to yourselves.”

“I can tell you,” answered Isabella; “a lover for Helen must be a pale, pensive, dark young man. He must be given to fits of abstraction, and have something mysterious about him. Had we lived in the time of the Peninsula war, her heart could not have stood a week’s siege from a young officer who wore his arm in a sling. As to how they were to have existed afterwards, they would, at least Helen would, never have thought it worth a moment’s consideration. She would have formed some vague notion of

‘A tent on shore, a galley on the sea,’

or a cottage ‘all woodbines and roses,’ and, ——, but dear Helen, I will spare your imagination, and not finish my picture.”

Mrs. Palmer looked a little alarmed, and said :—

“I think love all very proper in marriage, under certain restrictions. I do not much like love in a cottage, and yet I have known people very happy in cottages. But well-educated young ladies ought never to think about love, and yet I do not know how it is, they always will. However, not to be talking too much on such a delicate subject — we have not yet heard what Georgiana would like.”

“Georgiana,” answered Isabella, “would like her myrtle wreath made of strawberry leaves. She has a great idea of a duke, but would submit to be a

countess. *Le futur* must be rich, and I am afraid that she is unreasonable enough to expect that he should be young, and good-looking also."

"And pray what would you like yourself?" asked her sister.

"I ask three good qualities," replied Isabella, somewhat seriously; "he must be kind, rich, and rational."

"Certainly young ladies now-a-days think a great deal more about money than I did when I was a girl, and yet I made a great match," said Mrs. Palmer, looking reverently back to the honours and glories of her first marriage. "My dears, when I married poor dear Black, he had two carriages, ten servants, and a house in the Paragon." The girls well knew what was coming, and at once looked serious attention. "But, my dears," continued the old lady, "human prosperity is but a bubble, especially on the stock-exchange. At first I might have had gold, if I could have eaten it; I afterwards knew what it was to want bread. But we had good friends: do not believe those, my dear children, who say that there is no kindness or gratitude in the world. We met with both. I opened a school on Clapham Common, and in the course of a year twenty old friends sent me their children."

"How kind you would be to them!" exclaimed Helen, whose large soft grey eyes were yet larger and softer, for the tears that had gradually swelled beneath the long dark lashes.

“I hope,” replied Mrs. Palmer, “I did my duty by them. It saddened me at first to see so many young healthy faces, while there was death in that of my husband, but at last the sight of them quite heartened me. Poor dear Black never held up his head after his failure, but he used, as he sat in his easy chair, to like to hear the voices from the play-ground. I cannot tell you why, but my heart warmed more to him as he leant back pale and helpless in the little green-room, than it had ever done in our grand house in the Paragon. He was so patient, that I do believe he brought God’s favour on all our doings. I never used to go up in the stage to London to get my groceries and things, but I always ran back from the door to beg B’s blessing.”

If a smile did rise to the lips of her young hearers, it was instantly repressed, the feeling was too sacred and too tender for mirth. “He lived for three years, and then went off like a sleeping child. I was reading the Bible to him at the time, and thought that the sunshine which came in at the window would be too strong for his eyes. I looked up, and that glad and beautiful light fell upon the face of the dead.”

There was a deep silence, while Helen’s vivid fancy conjured up the scene. She knew the small neat room—she had been with Mrs. Palmer to see it; the cheerful garden filled with flowers, the hum of the distant play-ground, the rosy clusters of an acacia-tree, whose branches almost came in at the window; where

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stood the old man, worn and wasted — Helen almost fancied she could see the pale, yet tranquil face.

The silence was broken by Mrs. Palmer's saying :

“ But I did not send for you to make you all dull. God knows I sometimes wonder how we live over our bitterest sorrows ! and yet we ought to be thankful, for little avail is it to grieve over the past. I had a very handsome monument placed in Clapham Church, but I would not have ‘ by his disconsolate widow ’ put upon it. I was not disconsolate ; I trusted in the goodness of God, and I knew the good and kind old man was only gone before me to another and a better world.”

“ How much,” said Helen, anxious in her turn to divert the mind of their hostess, “ I should have liked to have been at school with you !”

“ Ah, my dear,” exclaimed Mrs. Palmer, brightening up at the idea of past power, “ we should have done each other credit. I can assure you there are girls of mine at every court in Europe ; I gave into none of the present idle fashions. It would have done you good to have seen how upright they sat, with their feet in the first position on a Sunday afternoon, when they drank tea with me. Then such a curtsy as every girl made when she came into the parlour, down to the very ground, and as steady as if they had had no joints. Poor dears, I liked to see them enjoy the seed-cake afterwards. I have always kept the receipt, there is some of it in the plate, Georgiana, by you.”

“Had you any favourites?” asked Helen.

“Oh, that was a secret,” replied Mrs. Palmer, with an air of ministerial reserve; “I was very careful never to show any preferences, but I do not mean to say but what I had them — human nature is human nature — and there are some girls,” with an affectionate glance at the circle round her, “that are so very engaging.”

“They must have loved you very dearly,” exclaimed Helen.

“I am sure I loved them,” replied their hostess; “every body talked of my good-luck, when Mr. Palmer, whose three daughters had been finished, came down to pay my Christmas bills, and married me during the holydays—a kind, good man he has always been; and we never have had a word but once, when Caroline said, before his face, that she would not be ruled by a school-mistress and a stepmother; and he was very angry with her. Poor dear! he did not consider that a young head never means half that it says. She left the room, and he said that it was no use taking any one’s part who would not take her own.”

“I am sure Mrs. Gooch is very fond of you now,” interrupted Helen.

“I found her crying when I went to look for her,” replied Mrs. Palmer, “and we never had another quarrel. But, my dears, young people are very hasty. Caroline never stopped to think that it was a great comfort to me to marry her father. We had known

each other for years, and knew each other's way. My health was then very bad, and affairs at Claver House were not as flourishing as they had been. I do not know how others make a fortune; I never could."

"You were too kind and too liberal," cried Isabella.

"Do not run away with the idea," replied Mrs. Palmer, "that kindness and liberality are incompatible with economy and business; but I had too many claims upon me, and my health failed. I have always thought it a special instance of God's good providence that my health and worldly prosperity were at their best during poor Black's life; and when my spirits began to grow weak, and my affairs embarrassed, then came Mr. Palmer. I have now been married to him twenty years, and I have been a very fortunate woman."

"And I hope you will be so for twenty years to come," said Georgiana; "I do not know what we should do without you," while Helen put her hand in affectionate silence into that of their kind friend.

"I am sure," replied Mrs. Palmer, "if it were not wicked, I should be glad that you had the scarlet fever; I am so much happier since I knew you. Mr. Palmer's daughters all married during the first few years; and when he has been all day in the city, I have felt very lonely; but, seeing you all come in, brings back so much to my memory. Many and many are the young faces that yours recall; and you, all of you, love me as I used to be loved."

The allusion to the scarlet fever requires a little explanation. In that fever originated the acquaintance of the Granards with Mrs. Palmer. It was part of Lady Anne's domestic policy to secure, if possible, an invitation for herself and two of her daughters from some friend who had a country house. This passed away six weeks or so before they went to Brighton. If nothing better offered, they paid a visit to Rotheles Castle, for the earl, though brought to something very like the entire submission of military discipline, yet stood firm on what he considered the family duty of asking his sister down every year. This invitation Lady Rotheles gave; and Lady Anne accepted, with reluctant civility; still, a pleasing and elegant looking woman like herself, fond of *ecarté*, which she played with great skill, whose daughters were both pretty and musical, rarely found herself at a loss what to do with her autumn.

It was about three years previous to the present evening that Lady Anne had gone, with her two eldest daughters, on a visit to a very intimate friend, Lady Penrhyn. The three younger ones were left under the care of the French governess; and their sole attendant, the kitchen-maid. Mademoiselle Virginie de Montmorenci (the French revolution seems rather to have increased than lessened the number of the descendants from the *haute noblesse*) was a fit governess for Lady Anne; she had a perfect Parisian accent, was musical—all French women sing—had a great deal of

tournure, the value of which she was always inculcating on her pupils: "*La Grace plus belle que la beauté*," was invariably the quotation when putting on her shawl; and, it must be confessed, that never did five English girls put on shawls to such perfection. In that point, at least, their education was complete. Her taste in dress was exquisite, and bitter were her lamentations over the dark stuff dresses and the green veils to which the younger Granards were condemned. Information she had none, and principle never even crossed her mind as a rule of action — "*c'est charmant*," or "*c'est de mauvais gout*," constituted her sole idea of praise or blame.

In one thing she was unlike Lady Anne, for she affected sentiment; and the sympathies of her young pupils were early awakened on behalf of Malvine and Mathilde. Mademoiselle Virginie always set the example of weeping; she had an idea that tears were feminine and becoming, and *les malheurs d'un cœur sensible* made up a much larger portion of her conversation than Lady Anne would either have understood or approved. "*Les aimables sympathies*" were the last things in the world that she would have tolerated.

The first week went off well enough; the mornings were past in hearing histories told by Mademoiselle to the honour and glory of her own *beaux yeux*, in divers fancy works, a few pages of Rollin, and then a good many pages from Mathilde. The lady then stated that she had some old friends just come to

London, and went out every evening. This was against Lady Anne's express injunctions, but there were too many quarters of the governess's salary due for her to consider obedience indispensable.

Towards the end of the week the girls complained of violent headaches and restless nights; and before Monday it was very obvious that they were all in a high fever. Tuesday Isabella was delirious, and Mademoiselle Virginie sent the maid to Covent Garden to buy some herbs, which, she said, would form a sovereign *tisane*.

On Sarah's return, she was surprised to see no light in the hall; she let herself in with the key; no one was stirring in the lower part of the house; the fire was out in the kitchen; and the really kind-hearted girl began to reproach herself that she had loitered a little on her errand. She hastily lighted the fire, and went up stairs to ask Mademoiselle how the herbs were to be boiled; she was surprised to hear no sound, for the vicinity of Virginie de Montmorenci was rarely matter of doubt—for, unless asleep, silence formed no portion of her ordinary accomplishments—and was still as death till she came to what Lady Anne always called the young ladies' floor; the words *attic*, or *garret*, were absolutely banished from the language. Then she heard a low moaning, and saw that the rooms were quite dark.

She opened the first door, and beheld Isabella laid across the bed; she had apparently risen and fallen

back, and lay quite unable to assist herself, but faintly asking for water. Sarah replaced her head on the pillow; and, after moistening her lips, hurried into the next room. Georgiana had left her own bed; she was, from a child, timid in the dark, and was laid by her sister, muttering incoherent expressions.

It was a complete but painful picture, the attitude and contrast between the two sisters. Georgiana lay in the common position of a sleeping child, her head cradled upon her arm, her bright golden hair falling over her face, but showing the flushed cheek; while neck, face, even to the temples, were tinged with a faint crimson.

Helen, on the contrary, was laid like one of the monumental figures extended above an ancient tomb, as straight, as rigid. The dark hair swept down on either side in long masses, and left her face exposed, which was wan as marble. The beautifully-cut features seemed thin, even to transparency; and their fixed ghastliness alarmed the girl, who thought, at first, she was dead; but the breathing was quick and painful, and every now and then a spasm convulsed the whole countenance.

In her alarm she called on Mademoiselle Virginie aloud; there was no answer. Sarah felt sure that she had been sent out of the way on purpose, and that the governess was gone.

Her surmise was the truth; Mademoiselle Virginie de Montmorenci had lately formed an acquaint-

ance with a gentleman whose name was as high-sounding and romantic as her own — Mr. Stanhope Fitz Raymond. He had quite convinced her that her genius was wholly lost in Lady Anne's family ; and this evening she had decided to join her fate with his, and commence operations on a wider scale.

She began by taking the few silver spoons which were to be found, and leaving behind a useful lesson, if people ever profited by such things, namely, that it is as well not to leave your house and family in the care of a foreigner, of whom you only know that her accent is irreproachable, and that she puts on a shawl to perfection. In the mean time, poor Sarah stood aghast ; there she was alone with three girls apparently dying ; but when nine and ten o'clock struck, and no Mademoiselle Virginie appeared, her alarm was at its height : at that moment came the appalling discovery that the silver spoons were missing also.

Sarah could bear no more : the very extremity of her distress suggested a consolation. Her sister had lived for some time as housemaid with a lady on the opposite side of the street. She was married, and living in the country ; but Sarah now recalled all that she had heard her say of Mrs. Palmer's goodness. Without hesitation she ran across, and asked to see the lady. Mrs. Palmer did not allow her to get half through her story before she rang for her shawl and bonnet, and went herself to Lady Anne's. Her kind heart was touched by the destitute state of the three young and

ovely creatures, who seemed to be dying before her very eyes. She looked round the desolate rooms, uncurtained and uncarpeted; the evenings were now damp and chilly, but no fire could be lighted in the empty fireplaces—all was misery and discomfort.

↳ Mrs. Palmer left the room abruptly, and returned home. She found Mr. Palmer slippered and arm-chaired, only waiting her appearance to ring for the scalloped oysters: he adhered almost as a duty to what he called the “good old fashion of suppers.” A few words put the scalloped oysters aside for the present, and he entered warmly into the plans of his kind-hearted wife. Servants, blankets, and carriage were alike put in requisition, and, before they sat down to the scalloped oysters, the three girls were safely in bed beneath their hospitable roof, and Mr. Carew, in whom Mrs. Palmer had unlimited confidence, had seen them.

“So much for your fine lady-mother,” said Mr. Palmer, as he sat down to supper; “you must write to her, my dear, to-morrow, and then I suppose we shall have her here in hysterics, worrying our very lives out.”

He was never more mistaken in any supposition. Mrs. Palmer did write the next day what she flattered herself was a masterpiece—she piqued herself upon her letter-writing. As she was wont to observe, “all the young ladies of Claver House wrote such excellent letters.” The idea of writing such excellent letters, being that of making the smallest possible quan-

tity of matter cover the largest possible quantity of space, "any body," as the then Mrs. Black used to observe, "can give some sort of account if any thing remarkable has occurred; but the great art is to write a long letter when you have nothing to say."

Now there was no lack of material for a letter to Lady Anne, but it required all Mrs. Palmer's talent for epistolary correspondence to give that material a fitting shape. Though she would not have owned it, even to herself—for it is a notable fact that we keep ourselves most in the dark about ourselves—yet she was a little embarrassed at the notion of having to write to Lady Anne—there was something in a title—at least, it was the first time she had ever had the honour of addressing one.

Then, as she pictured to herself Lady Anne quite overwhelmed at the idea of her children's illness, she was anxious not to alarm her too much; and yet it was necessary to state their danger, or she could not excuse bringing them over to her own house. Moreover, she thought it incumbent upon her to point out the injury done to thousands of deserving young women, by the preference given to foreigners. She knew two most amiable sisters, who had been educated at Claver House, now in want of situations. The fever itself, she had no doubt, originated in some neglect of the French governess — she would never allow one to gain ground. The letter concluded with most earnest entreaties that Lady Anne would not distress her-

self unnecessarily, and that she would permit the dear children to remain under her charge till they were completely cured. Lady Anne complied literally with both requests.

The next day, Mrs. Palmer received a very elegant-looking epistle, franked by the Earl of Rotheles. She was overwhelmed with a prodigality of most graceful thanks; and Mademoiselle Virginie with an equal number of reproaches. Lady Anne was then overwhelmed, in her turn, with the sense of Mrs. Palmer's kindness. She could not justify to herself further intrusion; still, as she had pressed the children's stay so much, she would accept the offer on account of her eldest daughters, for Mary's health was very delicate, and Louisa at that time ill with a cold.

Mrs. Palmer thought her own letter a triumph of skill—the real triumph was Lady Anne's. The girls, though their illness was long and dangerous, recovered under Mrs. Palmer's care, who watched over them as if they had been her own; and from that time an affection, as valuable as it was pleasant, sprang up between them. When Lady Anne returned, she called, and talked about every thing but the apothecary's bill. The acquaintance became at once a matter of form between the two elder ladies, one that Lady Anne would have broken off, if she could with the least regard to common decency. But the girls clung to their new and kind friend with all the earnestness of gratitude in the young; indeed, their chief pleasures and comforts they owed to Mrs. Palmer.

CHAPTER VI.

“How pretty Louisa is looking this morning !” said Lady Anne ; “what a dreadful waste, with nobody in town.”

“What a pity,” replied Isabella, “that people cannot have a savings-bank of good looks—hair, eyes, and skin to be put out at interest till wanted !”

“You would not trouble it much, child,” returned Lady Anne, pettishly ; “you know you are the plain one of the family. I do not know what I shall do with you when you come out ; you will have no beauty but that of youth.”

“Then, mamma,” exclaimed Isabella, “the sooner you bring me out the better.”

“I am sure,” cried her mother, “I have quite enough on my hands. No, no, you must wait, and long enough too, unless some of your sisters go off.”

“Well,” answered she, “I can wait and improve.”

“I do not think you will,” was Lady Anne’s ungracious reply. She was herself a blonde ; and it seemed almost a personal affront, that any of her children could be brunettes. Even in Helen, who was a decided beauty, she scarcely tolerated the dark hair ;

but it was too much to endure in Isabella—dark hair, eyes, and skin—yet Isabella was pretty, and promised to be still prettier; those large and penetrating orbs were full of fire and expression, and the slight form and regular features only required a little rounding and filling up for positive beauty. Yet, from being in a different style to what constituted the family-standard of loveliness, the idea had never crossed Isabella's mind; she was accustomed to be considered the plain one, and to that she quietly submitted. Still she had her moments of mortification. Coming immediately after Georgiana, whose cherub beauty was quite remarkable, she was perpetually subjected to the contrast, and that in a family where personal attractions were considered every thing; but in her the evil wrought for good; she became anxious to find some means of supplying her deficiency. Gradually the question arose, whether personal charms were quite worthy the value set upon them, and whether the sole object in existence was to be well married during your first season.

Once set a strong mind thinking, and you have done all that it needs for its education. It matters little what is the first impetus, so that it only be set to work. Isabella soon acquired the habit of reflection and comparison. She was the first to see how all real comfort in their house was sacrificed to some vain show, and that life had duties to fulfil, that were “unnamed, unknown” in their circle.

More keenly alive perhaps than any of her sisters to the little ridicules that belonged to Mrs. Palmer's character, she yet saw how small was their importance, and that Mrs. Palmer was not only a better but a happier person than most of those with whom she was acquainted. She early learned to detect and to despise the paltry seeming and the miserable motive—the great risk was that a mind so trained would be too cold and too harsh in its views—but from those worst of feminine faults, she was saved by her affection for her sisters; it subdued and softened her whole nature. Perhaps she was the fondest of Mary—for Mary, languid and depressed, was most dependant on her kindness—and in the slight attentions so grateful to an invalid, she found most employment for the generosity of her active nature.

Isabella loved those best whom she served most. Besides, she had a sort of fellow-feeling with Mary, for Lady Anne's lamentations were always over her eldest and youngest daughters—the one as having survived her beauty, the other as not likely to have any to survive. A loud rap at the door made the whole party start. Louisa coloured a deep, beautiful crimson. Lady Anne exclaimed, "I am sure I shall be glad to find that any one is in town as well as myself." And Isabella, going to the window, announced that it was a dark cabriolet, and that Lady Penrhyn and her brother were getting out of it. In another moment a fashionable but haggard-looking woman came into the

room, accompanied by a young and most gentleman-like man.

“I made Charles drive me here to-day,” said Lady Penrhyn, “for Penrhyn has taken the carriage into the city to-day, and at this season we have only one pair of horses.”

“And what good fortune,” cried Lady Anne, looking as pleased as her style permitted her to look about any thing, “has brought you to town?”

“Ill fortune, you mean,” replied the other; “why, the elections being safely over last autumn, Penrhyn thinks that country hospitality is unnecessary for two or three years to come. He will keep up his interest in the county by coals and blankets to the poor, which look well in the papers; and, in the mean time, he must make up what he calls his outlay of capital by some speculation. He has come about the company of a railroad.”

Lady Anne drew up, and looked unutterable scorn; she did not, however, think it necessary to give utterance to her thoughts in words, for she knew that Lady Penrhyn objected to any one’s sneering at her husband but herself. Perhaps the pleasure was so great that she thought it deserved a monopoly. Lady Penrhyn now explained that the object of her visit was to ask Lady Anne if she would accompany her to the theatre. “One must find something in the way of amusement, so I have taken a box at the Olympic, and I rely upon your going with me.”

Lady Anne assented at once ; it was just the sort of thing she liked. It might be wondered that Lady Penrhyn did not extend her invitation to the younger part of the family ; no one who knew her ladyship would have wondered at it. She did not patronize young ladies — they were always superfluous, sometimes inconvenient ; besides, flirting as she did to the last extremity of flirtation, she herself needed a sort of chaperon, and Lady Anne was just the sort of person who was invaluable in the way of sanction. There had never been even the shadow of an insinuation against her perfect correctness, and yet she was *d'une discretion parfaite*—she never saw or heard any thing more than it was intended she should, she never believed any tale of slander till the very last, “ because,” as she justly observed, “ scandal was so underbred, and destroyed all the use of society ;” but when denial became impossible, and *les bienséances* were outraged, nothing could then exceed her horror and indignation.

But both Lord and Lady Penrhyn are such complete representatives of a class that they deserve longer mention. John Penrhyn began life the younger brother of a younger branch, and passed the first forty years of his life in small, dark chambers in the Temple, twice a year going the circuit which included his native county. There were two, and two only, remarkable circumstances connected with his early career : the first was, that he never exceeded his slender income,

and, secondly, he never made the least progress in his profession. He was regular in his habits, parsimonious, and industrious ; but he lacked all talent needed at the bar—he had neither address, nor eloquence, nor ingenuity. But, at the age of forty, “ a change came o’er the spirit of his dream,” though the quotation is somewhat misapplied, for he had neither spirit nor dreams—an old and distant relative died, and left him an immense fortune.

The genius of the man now developed itself—it was that of making money out of money. A man must be rich to be a miser, and Penrhyn was a miser heart and soul. Now, avarice, like all other vices, has changed its bearing since the days of our ancestors. It has lost the picturesque ; no one now accumulates ingots of gold, or bars of silver ; there are warehouses, not caverns, for bales of rich stuffs, for “ ivorie, ambers, and all precious woods.” The temples of Mammon now are banking-houses and offices—in these Penrhyn luxuriated. Moreover, he duly prepared to indulge in all, as rich, that had appeared to him as indulgences while poor. He married for love—so it was said ; but I hold he took his fair cousin from other motives. He married for protection ; he was henceforth safe from all designs and schemes, two wives not being legal even in a man of his fortune. He was also more likely to be comfortable — a wife does make a house more comfortable — it is more cheerful, clean, better aired, with feminine supervision, and he liked to have all the

minor comforts about him ; besides, it was the greater contrast to his single life in chambers.

True, he married a girl without money ; but then, as he calculated, she could make no demands for extra expenses, prefacing each with “ you should remember, sir, the fortune I brought you.” Lastly, as the settlements were in his own power, he calculated that she would be more dependant on his good will and pleasure. In this he was somewhat mistaken ; still he was fond of her after his fashion—she could flatter and persuade him a little. He took an odd sort of pride in her conquests ; he considered them as so many proofs of his own good taste. Jealous he was not, for he only calculated, he never felt ; and his sum total of the matter was, that his wife had too much to lose if she ran away from him. In some things he restrained her expenses, while in others he was positively lavish. He objected to lace at two or three guineas a yard—that would wear out soon, and, once gone, “ is gone for ever ;” but he would load her with diamonds. The great object of his life was a peerage ; the house of commons was too turbulent for a man of his quiet habits, but there was a repose in that of lords which suited him exactly. Besides, he felt the mercantile value of his title as a speculation—it told when he was elected chairman of a committee, or one of the directors of an insurance company.

It was wonderful how he had increased his private fortune ; but in wealth, as with St. Denis, *cest la pre-*

mier pas qui coule—the difficulty is to commence the accumulation, but, the first little heap laid by, and then begin to think of your thousands and tens of thousands—they will come in time. Lord Penrhyn had no near relations, and no children. How civil people were to him, and how many onward-looking hopes were based on that civility! The only near connexion was his wife's brother, Charles Penrhyn, and for him he had procured a place in the Foreign Office, as he meant, some time or other, to push him forward in the diplomatic line. But Lord Penrhyn disliked using his influence, not from that honourable spirit of independence which shrinks from undue obligation, but out of sheer selfishness, which dreads lest it should be called upon to make a return.

Lady Penrhyn cared little about her brother; he was sometimes useful, and sometimes in the way. Handsome and gentlemanlike, he was rather a credit to her than otherwise; he had between three or four hundred a year, his club, his cab, and the run of her house—what could he want more! That he could desire home, independence, or a sphere for the exertion of what ability and industry he might possess, crossed her mind as little as it did that of her husband. Every one considers the world as made especially for their own purposes: Archimedes only desired to see how far he could raise it by means of lever and screw; Sir Godfrey Kneller thought that the human race were only created to be painted; while Talma could only

say of any burst of passion, How well that would tell upon the stage ! or, as Wordsworth says,

“ Each man has some one object of pursuit,
To which he sedulously devotes himself.”

Now, Lady Penrhyn had her ruling passion—she held that mankind were sent upon earth for one express purpose — to be flirted with ; and she carried flirtation to its last extremity. To no admiration was she quite indifferent, unless she had been in possession of it for some time — a lover was as necessary to her existence as a diamond, but she was not very particular as to who that lover might be ; a list of her *adornateurs* would have included a most curious collection of contrasts. All the time she professed the utmost devotion to her husband, and lover after lover was dismissed, not a little surprised to find that there was some truth in it. The fact was, her husband represented house, carriage, and position in society. She would have had something to lose by losing him, whereas the loss of a lover was nothing.

It might seem at first sight extraordinary how she contrived to keep her list so well supplied ; but nothing deceives its possessor like vanity — so far from taking warning by another’s disappointment, it only holds it as an additional trophy to its own success. Lady Penrhyn had been, and was still, a very pretty woman, with superb dark eyes, and a perfect understanding of the toilette ; she dressed with seeming carelessness, but it was truly “ most studied to kill.” Added to

this, she had a handsome house, in which there was a good deal going on. It was a pleasant lounge of a morning, when you had nothing better to do with yourself; and, if you were expected to flatter her vanity, she was quite ready to flatter your's in return. Such was the lady who, having finished her whispering conversation with her hostess, very unceremoniously called her brother from a lively conversation that was going on between him and the girls, just gave them a languid bow, and departed.

“I wonder,” said Lady Anne, as she too left the room, “what Lady Penrhyn takes her brother about with her for? He is neither a good match now, nor ever likely to be one.”

“I think,” said Isabella, startling Louisa, who had been watching the cabriolet down the street, “that Lady Penrhyn might have asked you to go with mamma.”

“What should she ask me for?” exclaimed Louisa, colouring.

“Only because it would have given you pleasure,” replied her sister; “but when did Lady Penrhyn ever think of any body's pleasure but her own?”

CHAPTER VII.

“Who do you think,” exclaimed Lady Anne, as she entered the drawing-room late next day with an open letter in her hand, “is coming to London?”

“Uncle Frank,” cried Isabella, whose quick eye had caught sight of the hand-writing.

“I wish you would call people by their right names,” said her mother, pettishly; “you know very well that Mr. Glentworth is not your uncle, and I should not suppose that he would like to be called so.”

Isabella was silenced, though she could not but remember that he always seemed pleased at the appellation given him when they were children, and that he himself used the term in the numerous kind little notes that accompanied his numerous presents. They had not seen him for years; still “Uncle Frank” was among their most agreeable recollections. The few pretty things, whether trinkets or toys, that they possessed, were all his gifts. If ever any of the girls had taken a fancy to personify their good genius, they would certainly have given to his image all they remembered of “Uncle Frank.”

There was a less cordial feeling on Lady Anne's

side, or rather she secretly disliked and feared him. Though some years younger than Mr. Granard, their friendship was strong and sincere: and to Mr. Glentworth's remonstrances both to herself and to her husband may be ascribed Lady Anne's distaste; she had also a natural dislike to all who were poor, and this had long been the case with Mr. Glentworth. He had been brought up as the heir to a large fortune, but when his father died his affairs were found greatly embarrassed. Frank's own share was protected by the entail which ended in himself. He did not hesitate a moment, but sold the estate and paid every shilling; though by so doing he left himself only a narrow income, and offended an uncle from whom he had great expectations, the said uncle not liking to see the estate go out of the family, and yet refusing to make any advance towards clearing it. In the very prime of life, Mr. Glentworth found every prospect gone; he had only a meagre pittance, compared to his former expenditure; but he had neither the habits nor the opportunity of increasing it. It was too late to think of a profession, and he had lived too many years in indolence and luxury to begin now with business and exertion: cut off from his former sources of pleasure, he fell back upon himself; most people forgot him; the few who remembered said "he was grown so odd!"

In the mean time, he lived strictly within his income; did many kind, even generous things; and,

during the course of his travels, obtained sufficient experience to form an advantageous commercial connection with a house at Marseilles. This gave him employment and independence, and above all things enabled him to look forward. When he thought of England, it was always in connection with his friend Granard's orphan family, and now that he was coming, his first letter was to them.

“And what do you think brings Mr. Glentworth to London?” asked Lady Anne.

“Business,” replied Isabella.

“Business!” exclaimed her mother; “you learnt that odious word from the Palmers; indeed, he is a great deal too rich to think of business. Heartily ashamed will he now be of that horrid connection he has formed somewhere abroad; not that I ever understand those sort of things. I wonder that he could not live like a gentleman quietly in London.”

“You forget, mamma,” returned Isabella, “that you always told us he was very poor; though I am sure no one would think it from the presents he used to send us.”

“Very odd,” replied Lady Anne, “how fond he always was of you all—a lucky thing now. But only think, that tiresome Mr. Glentworth, who would die while we were at Brighton, is our Mr. Glentworth's old uncle, who has left him all his money.”

“How glad I am!” was the universal exclamation.

“How foolish of us,” exclaimed Georgiana, “to be

so sorry for Mr. Glentworth's death! I have heard Fanchette say he was immensely rich."

"Mr. Frank," continued Lady Anne, "has asked himself to dine here to-morrow."

"How very delightful!" cried Isabella.

"How very provoking!" interrupted her mother; "he might just as well have called in the morning."

"I do not think," said Mary, "that Mr. Glentworth will trouble his head much about his dinner; he must have altered very much if he does."

"What a bad habit you have, Mary," cried Lady Anne, "of remembering what happened so long ago! However, perhaps Mr. Glentworth may be flattered by it. But the question now is, what shall we do about dinner? I dare say Mrs. Palmer will lend us things."

The girls all coloured simultaneously, but only Isabella had courage to answer. "Is there any necessity, mamma, for our borrowing any thing?"

"A very great necessity," replied Lady Anne. "Mr. Glenworth used to dine with us at Granard Park, and I have no idea of his looking down upon us now."

"I am sure," cried Isabella, "that he is much too kind to do that; I don't think that he would care how poor we were."

"We owe it," replied Lady Anne, "to ourselves to 'keep up appearances.' I shall write myself to Mrs. Palmer. Of course, she will be flattered by my asking a favour." The girls looked aghast one at the other

"I am sure," said Isabella, "if I were as rude to

Mrs. Palmer as mamma is, I could die before I could ask a favour of her." This speech was unheard, as Lady Anne was busy, writing to her opposite neighbour the following note: —

"Dear madam—I am just hurried out of my life by the unexpected arrival of an old friend of our family's, who has just come into his uncle, Mr. Glentworth's property, and a visit to England has become necessary. He dines with us to-morrow; and, what with my sudden arrival from Brighton, and one thing or other, we are in utter confusion. May I rely on your kindness to supply our deficiencies in plate, china, &c.? Perhaps also you will allow your cook to give mine some instructions. It is of such vital importance to the dear children's interests, that Mr. Glentworth should be conciliated, that I know you will be interested in our behalf. I shall send two of the girls over with this *petit billet* to receive your instructions.

"Yours, dear Mrs. Palmer,

"Most truly,

"ANNE GRANARD."

The note was written in a delicate hand with a crow-quill, on primrose-coloured paper, with a lilac seal—the motto "*tout à vous*;" and the whole with just a faint perfume of jasmine. It was, as Lady Anne said, "perfectly irresistible. You will take this note at once," she added, addressing Georgiana and Isabella.

"Oh! mamma," cried the latter, "could you not send the page?"

“He has to go to a dozen places; besides,” continued Lady Anne, “you will manage the business much better, and bring me word what Mrs. Palmer thinks we shall want.” From this there was no appeal; but the heroine, in the old ballad of Barbara Allen, when

“So slowly she put on her clothes,
“So slowly she drew nigh him,”

could not have set off on her errand more reluctantly than the two Misses Granard crossed the street. They gave a low uncertain rap at the door; were kept waiting in consequence, during which time they suffered a little agony of anticipation, and at last found themselves in the drawing-room, which they usually entered with such alacrity. Fortunately, Mrs. Palmer was so employed with her dumb pets, that she had no time to notice her speaking ones beyond her usual kind greeting. “Just come,” said she, “as I wanted you. There, Georgiana, you can hold my Java sparrow; he knows you, and Isabella will hold the cage.” The changing the seeds and putting fresh water took up enough time to allow the visitors to recover themselves a little. But the moment they drew quietly round the fire, Mrs. Palmer saw that there was something the matter. They were first absent, then began to speak hurriedly, and yet broke off abruptly.

“What is the matter with you?” at last exclaimed she, suddenly.

“Nothing,” said Georgiana.

“Only,” replied Helen, “only that we have a note from mamma to give you.”

“And why do you not give it to me?” asked Mrs. Palmer.

“Because.....” said both at once but neither finished the sentence ; however, Isabella gave the note, which Mrs. Palmer, having first found her spectacles, duly read.

“There is nothing in this note about yourselves,” said the kind old lady, “so, before I answer it, tell me what is the matter with you.”

“Nothing but the note,” replied Georgiana.

“I will conceal nothing,” said Isabella, firmly; “we feared that you might not be pleased with mamma’s note. It seemed that we were too ready to take advantage of your kindness.”

“It would not be your doing then, my dears,” answered Mrs. Palmer; “but we ought to be glad, as good christians, to help one another, if it be only in the lending a few silver spoons. I’ll tell you the truth, my dears, and that may be blamed, but it can’t be shamed. I don’t like your mamma, and she looks down upon me ; which of us is right is no business of ours just now. But I would do any thing I could to oblige her, if it were only for your sakes ; so you may give her my best compliments ; or stay, as she wrote me a note, I will write her one. Nothing is so rude as to send a verbal message.” Mrs. Palmer then wrote her note, while the young people felt more and more

at home, as she employed them in some little office of assistance. They mended her a pen, which exactly suited her hand ; they folded the note and sealed it, first reading it aloud for their approval : —

“ Mrs. Palmer’s best compliments (I did not say dear madam, for I do not feel it) to Lady Anne Granard, and begs to say that any thing she has is quite at her service. Perhaps she will allow her to send over the cook and butler for to-morrow ; and Mrs. Palmer only hopes that Lady Anne Granard will do her the favour of mentioning any little service, which it will be a real pleasure to offer.

“ And now, dears, go home at once. I suppose I must not hope to see you to-morrow, but the next day you must come and tell me how the dinner went off.”

“ We will give you,” said Isabella, “ a full and particular account of uncle Frank.”

“ You should say Mr. Glentworth,” exclaimed Georgiana. “ You know mamma said it would make him feel so old to have us call him uncle ; and, do you know, I am quite sure that she means him to marry Mary.”

Mrs. Palmer shook her head, and Isabella reminded her sister that mamma would be waiting. At the hall door they were met by Helen, for a moment so eager to tell her news, that she forgot to ask the result of their embassy.

“ Who do you think has just driven through the street ?”

“ Mr. Glentworth,” exclaimed the girls.

“ No, no, our beautiful stranger,” replied she.

“ Are you quite sure ?” cried Isabella, her dark eyes kindling with delight.

“ I saw her returned, Helen, as distinctly as I see you. I tried to catch her eye, but in vain.”

“ Oh, what would I not give to see her again !” said Isabella. The beautiful stranger, as with girlish romance they called her among themselves, was the only mystery in their brief and uneventful lives. When Isabella was ten and Georgiana two years older, they formed an acquaintance on the sands near Brighton with a lady, who, like themselves, seemed to confine her rambles to the most solitary part of the coast. The fact was, that Lady Anne, aware of the worse than common attire of the younger children, always ordered them to be kept out of sight as much as possible. Still, they were too pretty to need the aid of dress, and the stranger, attracted by their appearance, formed an acquaintance with them : two or three times they went to her small, but elegant-looking villa, where cakes and fruit always awaited them. A careless phrase of Georgiana’s drew Lady Anne’s attention to the matter ; the maid was questioned, and divers suspicions, very unfavourable to their beautiful and secluded hostess, entered the minds of both maid and mistress. The intercourse was strictly forbidden, and for some mornings they walked in an opposite direction.

The first time that they took their accustomed stroll, they met the lady walking slowly along. The moment she caught sight of the children, she came eagerly forward, but was met, to her great surprise, by reserve, though it was mixed with an obvious wish to speak. At that moment the servant said pertly, "You were told, young ladies, that your mamma does not approve of your speaking to nobody knows who."

"Is that all?" said the lady, with her own peculiar sad smile. "I will not detain you now; but this evening I will write to Lady Anne, and I dare say that she will allow you to come and drink tea with me." The note came; what its contents were Lady Anne kept to herself, but the children received permission to spend the afternoon with Mrs. Cranstoun. For two successive years the acquaintance continued. Mrs. Cranstoun remained for a couple of months every autumn in the same villa, and the three younger girls were more there than at home. An old Scotch lady, grave, silent, and even stern in her manner, was the only living creature they ever saw besides the servants. Every thing indicated wealth; books, music, flowers, and the pretty trifles scattered round were all of the most expensive kind, and their hostess was young, and singularly beautiful, but some mystery there certainly was.

What could induce one so formed for society to live in such entire seclusion! Children as the Granards were, they understood that there was something a

little out of the ordinary course, in their acquaintance, but the very mystery gave its charm—it was the one touch of poetry in their usually prosaic existence—and Mrs. Cranstoun was the very being about whom to imagine a romance. Slight and delicately formed, her figure was as childish as that of her young companions, but her movements lacked the buoyancy of youth; they were slow and languid, though graceful to a degree, that an artist might have studied. All that the girls knew of her was that she was born in Italy; and she had the pale complexion, whose dazzling whiteness was unbroken by the rose, and the large black eyes which mark southern beauty. She looked very young, but there was that about her, which told that time had not passed lightly over her; her years might be few, but they had been marked by those sorrows which steal sunshine from the eyes. A perpetual shadow seemed to weigh down those long dark eyelashes, as if heavy with the weight of unshed tears; and the lip had the sweetness of a smile, but not its gaiety.

She clung to the lovely children, as those cling to any interest that breaks upon a life otherwise monotonous. Their cheerfulness was the sunshine; she did not join in it, but she liked to see it. It never occurred to her to offer her young guests the amusements usual to their age, but she shared her own with them. They would sit whole mornings in the drawing-room, from whence daylight was carefully ex-

cluded, only a chance sunbeam, as the wind waved the blind to and fro, wandered over the various exotics which filled the air with perfume. Amenaide, for such was her name, would recline on a pile of cushions in the midst of the little group, one of whom would read aloud, gradually learning to imitate the low melancholy tones with which she herself read.

The girls acquired more knowledge of English imaginative literature, than in the whole previous course of their lives, and when the book was closed, and they talked over the just finished poem or narrative, insensibly the taste was formed, for that of their guide was exquisite. Amenaide was one of those beings on whom nature, like a fairy, lavishes her best gifts of keen sensibility, a fine perception of the beautiful, and an intuitive feeling of the right. Perhaps her views of life were too morbid, but her companions had enough cheerfulness to counterbalance any undue tinge of sadness given by one who had obviously suffered much. Then — for they had all the sweet voice, and fine-toned ear, which must be a charmed birthright, as no art can ever give it—they delighted to catch from her the Scottish and Italian airs, which she sang with an expression, the very meaning of their wild melody.

She would often talk to them of Italy and India, but with her childhood her remembrances seemed to stop; she never talked of any other portion of her life. Neglected and unloved, as these worse than orphan

girls appeared to be, it was strange how friends sprang up for them. Mrs. Palmer was their good genius in common life, while Amenaide was the fairy that led them through the charmed regions of romance, and of music. It was curious to mark the attraction that invariably seems to exist between opposite natures. Helen, the most enthusiastic, the most highly-toned of the family, was the favourite with the practical and sober-minded Mrs. Palmer; while Isabella, the more shrewd, sensible, and firm, was the favourite with the romantic and pensive stranger—and devotedly was her attachment repaid. Always kept in the background, and undervalued by Lady Anne, who disliked the spirit of active usefulness which characterized her youngest daughter, this was the first time that Isabella had been loved for herself; and she requited it—as love is returned in youth, and youth only—grateful, eager, and undoubting.

It was now two years since they had seen her; the villa had been let for the last two autumns to other occupants. Deep had been the disappointment, when, turning their steps in the accustomed direction, they saw the quiet and secluded cottage, where hours had passed like a dream of poetry, a scene of noise and bustle. The blinds were drawn up, the plants removed from the steps, and the lawn occupied by some six or seven children, who, if they came to Brighton for their health, had, at all events, a good stock on hand to begin with. From that time they had heard

nothing more of their beautiful stranger, till Helen caught sight of her, driving past. For a few moments even Mrs. Palmer's reception of Lady Anne's note was forgotten, and it was not till they heard her bell ring violently, that Isabella recollected that she still held the important missive in her hand.

The next day was one of constant hurry and anxiety. In all places, and under all places and circumstances, (English places and circumstances) the dinner is the most important event—the epoch of the day, the first care of the morning, the last satisfaction of night. Modern history might be told by a succession of dinners; to-day, a dinner commemorates reform; to-morrow the reverse. Now O'Connell appeals to the sympathies of his hearers at Birmingham on behalf of the finest and most ill-used peasantry on earth: then three courses and a desert are served up in Sir Robert Peel's honour, by the Merchant Tailors' Company. But dinners are not only charged with the fate of "Cæsar, and of Rome:" they also belong to the usual routine of existence. The cook is the most important person in the household—the master's temper, the mistress's comfort depend upon her—every thing else revolves in an axis around five, six, seven o'clock, or whatever may be the appointed hour for sounding "that tocsin of the heart, the dinner-bell." So much for every day; but, when to the word dinner is added the word party, great is the tumult thereof. Even where servants are many, and

“expense no object,” it is a consideration : the master feels that his credit is at stake ; and, as no dinner is given without a motive, on its success depends also the success of his scheme.

But, of all cases, the most extreme is where the party is out of the common course of things. Now no one could it be so far removed from the ordinary current of existence as at Lady Anne’s. It had literally never happened before ; none could recollect the fact of a friend having even lunched there. Lady Anne gave over-night orders upon orders, but the next day they were left to be executed by five inexperienced girls, a boy, and a kitchen-maid. Here Mrs. Palmer’s forethought stood them in good stead ; her cook was sent over the first thing, who seemed not a little alarmed at the poverty of the land. However, she had been strictly enjoined to make the best of every thing, and her own kitchen was close at hand, while she knew that in the course of the morning a basket of game and fruit, &c. would arrive, veiled under the pretext that Mrs. Palmer had just received them herself from the country.

“I do not believe,” said Lady Anne, as she took her last look in the glass, at the result of her careful toilette, “that Mr. Glentworth will find me much altered, and yet it is twelve years since I saw him.” She certainly looked very handsome : the black velvet dress set off her still fair skin, the blonde filled up any angles, the few pink flowers in the cap gave it light-

ness, while its being somewhat close, concealed that the cheek was less rounded than of yore, and, though the whole costume was exquisitely becoming, no one could say that it affected youthfulness. Lady Anne had too good taste for that. Still, any one who knew her not, might have thought, from the unusual care and pains bestowed on her appearance, that she herself meditated a conquest of their visiter. They would have been wrong in their surmise ; Lady Anne was too intensely selfish herself, to suspect any one of being otherwise. Poor, with five unportioned daughters, no one could think of such a folly as marrying her. Her attention to the toilette of to-day had for motive the long habit of personal vanity, and a wish to show how little twelve years had altered her.

Not but what she had her own castle building, but it was with reference—she had decided that it would be the most proper thing in the world for Mr. Glentworth to marry Mary. She remembered him a grave silent young man, Mary was grave and silent too. She had never liked him, but that was of little moment now ; Mary could not afford to be particular, she ought only to be thankful for such a chance.

“Mary,” said her mother, on entering the drawing-room, where the elder girls were employed in those slight decorations which female taste knows so well how to give, “I beg that you will not over-fatigue yourself ; go and lie down on the sofa in my room. Fanchette will come to you when it is time for you to dress.”

Mary obeyed in wondering silence, which was increased when the French *soubriette* obviously taxed her abilities to the utmost; she had received full instructions from her mistress. "Dress her hair in loose falling curls, they will best conceal the thinness of her face, and put in a *nœud* or two *coulour de rose* to lighten her up a little, and Fanchette, just give one touch of rouge."

"What time," asked Louisa, "do you expect Mr. Glentworth?"

"Not till dinner," replied her mother, "which is exceedingly lucky; a man is always in better humour when he has had his dinner. By the by, Isabella, I do not see any necessity for your making your appearance; you will be supposed in the schoolroom, and Georgiana must wear the white muslin frock. You can make yourself very useful, as some one must see to the dessert being properly sent up, and, as I mean to have tea and coffee made out of the room, you must help Fanchette."

Isabella felt more disappointed than she liked to express. Uncle Frank was associated with so many kind notes and pretty presents, that she had a natural and affectionate wish to see him; moreover, she could not but feel keenly the difference always made between herself and the others.

"Oh, mamma," cried Georgiana, and the speech was heroic for her who dearly loved dress, "I would rather wear my merino, and then I should keep Isabella in countenance."

“ I wish,” said Lady Anne, “ that my daughters would not take the trouble of thinking for me—I have settled the matter as I think best. I cannot imagine why I should be so unlucky as to have so many girls; it is really too provoking.”

“ I wonder what Uncle Frank is like ? ” said Isabella.

“ I fancy him,” replied Georgiana, “ in a brown coat and wig.”

“ I dare say,” continued Lady Anne, “ that he has got all sorts of odd ways and habits; but you must none of you mind them. He is now rich enough to have a style of his own. Be sure you contrive to let him know that we usually dine early — I want him to acquire a habit of spending his evenings here; but a dinner every day would be too much of a good thing — we should be ruined in a week.”

“ I have borrowed Mrs. Palmer’s backgammon-board,” said Isabella, whose notion of an elderly gentleman’s amusements of an evening was derived from what she had seen Mr. Palmer do.

“ Backgammon ! ” exclaimed her mother, with an expression of sovereign contempt; “ had you not better have asked for a cribbage-board while you were about it ? ”

Seven o’clock came; all the girls, excepting poor Isabella, were assembled in the drawing-room, and it would have been difficult to find a prettier coup d’œil, or one arranged with a better eye to effect. Lady

Anne was in the arm-chair, and Louisa was seated a little behind her ; Mary was opposite, and a seat most conveniently vacant beside her ; while the two younger girls were placed on a low ottoman in the middle. A rap at the door made them all start — Isabella afterwards confessed that she had peeped through the back parlour door as he went upstairs—and Mr. Glentworth made his appearance. He took all the young ladies completely by surprise — if he had turned five and thirty he did not look it ; and Uncle Frank, instead of an odd-looking individual in a brown coat and wig, was a tall and handsome man, pale, and with a shade of melancholy, which only gave interest to his fine features.

Lady Anne could not but allow that, if years had passed lightly over herself, they had passed still more lightly over him, to say nothing of his being some few years younger. He was altered from the shy, silent young man who used to spend morning after morning with Mr. Granard in the library, to Lady Anne's equal displeasure and surprise — for a young cavalier would often have been an addition to her parties, and it was to her incomprehensible what amusement could be found in books or in her husband's society. The alteration was, however, one of improvement : his manner had the ease of one accustomed to make his own way in every kind of society, and his air was singularly *distingué*. Lady Anne's first idea was regret that she had wasted any care upon Mary's appear-

ance, who was looking, if possible, worse than usual. "Such a man, and such a fortune," thought her ladyship, "may marry whom he pleases;" and, contrary to her original plan, she determined that Louisa and Georgiana should sit next him at dinner.

Certainly the idea of falling in love with those whom he had never thought of but as children never crossed Mr. Glentworth, as he at once said, laughing, and averred that he was taken quite by surprise to find himself among so many lovely young women; but he greeted them with that easy affection which showed he intended to retain his footing as an old friend of the family, and was the first to go back upon his old appellation of Uncle Frank. "But here are only four," said he; "where is the fifth?"

"Isabella does not dine with us, except when we take our early dinner alone," replied Lady Anne.

"I had hoped to have seen all my young friends together;" but Mr. Glentworth was interrupted by the announcement of dinner, where Lady Anne, by two or three quiet manœuvres, contrived to make her daughters understand that the arrangements which she had so carefully impressed upon their minds, were to be broken. Mr. Glentworth took the foot of the table, and Louisa and Georgiana sat on either side. The dinner went off very well, though there was a degree of restraint. With all the graceful ease of Lady Anne's manners, they never encouraged any spontaneous flow of feeling or of thought—you felt intuitively

that feeling or thought would be *de trop*. Between the hostess and the guest there was an old animosity. Young as he was at the time, he had seen the imprudence of Mr. Granard's way of living ; he had often remonstrated, and the death of his father, with the subsequent derangement of his affairs, had alone prevented his following up his advice with such assistance as would have made it effectual.

Lady Anne smothered her dislike, because there was a hope of his marrying one of her daughters ; and he subdued his because he could not allow it to interfere with his hope of serving the orphans of his old friend. The very dinner increased his anxiety—he saw that it was infinitely beyond Lady Anne's means ; the same course of extravagance was therefore still being renewed, with the same disregard of consequences. The girls themselves interested him on their own account, not only for the nameless charm of youth and loveliness, but there was something natural and sweet about them, which he could hardly have believed possible in Lady Anne's daughters.

Still the conversation languished ; Lady Anne was most unnecessarily anxious to impress upon Mr. Glentworth the success that they had met with in society, and that, if no longer rich, they were still the fashion. The girls were always restrained in their mother's presence ; unconsciously they had learned that any display of feeling only excited her scorn, and they had acquired a habit of silence, because they had

so little in common to talk about. However, when dinner was over, Mr. Glentworth pleaded his continental habits, and accompanied them at once to the drawing-room; and there his first inquiry was after Isabella.

“Oh,” replied Lady Anne, “she is too young to be introduced.”

“Surely not to such an old friend as myself; pray let me ask to see her,” said their guest.

“The next time,” exclaimed her mother; “Isabella, not expecting a summons, will only be in the schoolroom toilette.”

“My dear madam,” cried Mr. Glentworth, “I wish to see herself, not her frock. I am sure my young friend here will go and fetch her sister without further delay.”

Georgiana sprang up eagerly, and, Lady Anne having given an ungracious permission, bounded down stairs, and found that Isabella had just finished making the tea.

“You must come upstairs at once,” exclaimed Georgiana, “Mr. Glentworth insists upon seeing you; you will like him so much; oh, I do wish you had any thing on but that old brown merino.”

“I do not think it matters much,” said Isabella, laughing.

“Why Mr. Glentworth did say,” returned her sister, “that it was you he wanted to see, not your frock.”

“ In that case, the sooner he sees me the better ; ” and both sisters ran up stairs, duly composing themselves into a slow and graceful entrance before they ventured to appear before their mother. Mr. Glentworth was surprised to see the tall and elegant girl who was summoned from the schoolroom, and, in spite of the old brown merino dress, Isabella never looked prettier. The careless banding back of the hair only showed the fine shape of the head ; pleasure at being remembered lighted up her clear dark eyes ; and a little touch of natural shyness made her colour most becomingly when introduced.

The evening passed off very gaily, for music broke up the formality of the circle, while the books and drawings scattered about led to some conversation, in which Mr. Glentworth talked of the various parts of Europe he had visited ; Lady Anne secretly wondering what could take any one anywhere but to the capitals, while the girls were delighted to hear of rocks and valleys, and were only divided in favour between the Appenines and the Pyrennees. When he rose to take leave, Lady Anne expressed her hope, couched in the most flattering terms, that they should soon see him again.

“ May I then, ” said Mr. Glentworth, “ place myself at once on the footing of *l'amie de la maison*, and come in and out just as I please ? I am the worst person in the world for formal dinners, but I shall be thankful to have a resting-place whereon to bestow my tediousness in an evening. ”

This was the very thing which Lady Anne wished, and a most gracious permission ensued.

“ It is a great misfortune,” said her ladyship, with a deep sigh, as the door closed after their visitor, “ to have so many daughters—a man hardly knows which he likes best among them ; still I do not despair — it is a great point to have secured his constant visits.”

CHAPTER VIII.

“ Why, you are all in ecstasies about him,” said Mrs. Palmer, the next morning.

“ So elegant !” said Louisa.

“ So interesting !” said Helen.

“ So handsome !” said Georgiana.

“ So kind !” said Isabella.

“ Well, it is a clear case,” continued Mrs. Palmer, “ that one of you he must have.”

“ Not me,” exclaimed Louisa, and then coloured deeply. Mrs. Palmer looked at her for a moment; this was not the first time she had suspected that her young friend had no longer a heart to give.

“ Oh, mamma,” cried Georgiana, “ intended him for Mary ; but now that he turns out so young and good-looking, she seems to think him too good for her.”

“ Poor thing !” said Mrs. Palmer, “ I wish I had her in the country, she should have a basin of new milk, fresh from the cow, every morning. A young friend of mine, who looked just as she does, was quite cured by it.”

The efficacy of even new milk may be doubted to

“minister to a mind diseased,” still less can it “pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow.” Mary’s health and spirits had given way under the constant pressure of one bitter remembrance—she felt herself a burthen upon her mother, and in the way of her sisters; the very affection showed to her by the latter only made her think with deeper regret on what she might have done for them if things had gone differently. Then she was continually hearing of Lady Allerton’s extravagance, and Lady Allerton’s dissipation; and her conjugal quarrels were topics of common conversation. Mary could not avoid the thought, and the pang of “how much happier I could have made him!” Then she had so little to take her out of herself; her mother more and more discouraged her going out, and, indeed, she had neither strength nor spirits for the fatiguing gaiety of a London season.

“Not yet five and twenty, and she is a complete wreck,” continued Mrs. Palmer; “yet I cannot but think that she would be much happier if she were well married. It is much more comfortable to have a house of one’s own. I wish Mr. Glentworth may take a fancy to her.”

“I do not think,” said Isabella, seriously, “that Mary would marry any one, neither does Mr. Glentworth seem a marrying man.”

“And pray,” said Mrs. Palmer, half laughing, “what is your idea of a marrying man?”

“Why,” replied Isabella, “most of the marriages

that I have heard of have originated in some motive that lay very near the surface. Some men are desperately in love; but more often it is that the table wants a lady at the head of it; or a man is poor, and marries for money; or he is rich, and wants connexion; or very often he marries because his friends have decided the matter for him, and it is less trouble to make the offer than to avoid making it. Now none of these first causes appear to influence Mr. Glentworth."

"Perhaps," said Georgiana, "he has had an unhappy attachment?"

"Or, perhaps," said Louisa, "he has been too poor to marry. He may have been engaged, and, after waiting for years, is now able to fulfil his engagement."

"An engaged man," replied Isabella, "would not have been so anxious to seek us out, and would not be so anxious to secure our house as a refuge for his leisure hours."

"Well, my dears," said Mrs. Palmer, "we shall see; and, what is of most importance to you is, I think, from all I can hear, you will find in Mr. Glentworth a sure and kind friend; and that is what we all of us want some time or other."

In a few days, Mr. Glentworth became almost domesticated in the house, an arrangement partly pleasing and partly otherwise to Lady Anne. She liked the air of intimacy with a man so rich; his acquaintance was no expense, and he still retained his old habit

of making handsome presents. Nevertheless, she was disappointed in the little progress of her matrimonial schemes; there was no preference for one daughter more than another; he was equally kind and affectionate to all. One morning his visit terminated in a most satisfactory manner; he gave each of the elder girls a sealed paper, which, when opened, was found to contain a hundred pounds. To them it seemed the riches of the world, and each was expressly enjoined to spend it on what she liked best. Only those who have often wanted money—wanted it painfully and mortifyingly—who have constantly been debarred gratifications common to those among whom they live—only those can tell the delight of suddenly possessing a large sum of money, to do just what they please with. How many enjoyments of taste, fancy, and kind feeling were comprised in the possession! Even Mary was quite animated.

“We will,” exclaimed she, a faint colour warming her cheek at the very idea, “have an excursion into the country—really the country. Fancy, if it be but for a week, having a cottage, into whose garden we can walk unobserved, and gather the roses ourselves. What delicious strolls of a summer evening in the fields, where the hay has just been cut; and through green lanes, covered with wild honeysuckle!” Louisa was silent; but there was a smile round her dimpled mouth, which betrayed how pleasant was the reverie in which she indulged.

“We will now,” cried Helen, “have a new harp—we can play from morning till night in your cottage, Mary.”

“And I,” said Georgiana, “will have a white satin dress.”

“The only sensible thing I have heard said yet,” interrupted Lady Anne — then addressing herself to Helen and Georgiana, added, “You know that you are to be presented next season, and this money will just buy court-dresses, and hire your ornaments. I am sure, if you had gone without, I could not have paid for them.” Helen sat in silent disappointment; but Georgiana’s fancy was at once busy with ostrich feathers, lace, and white silk; and her interest soon communicated itself to Helen. What girl of nineteen could listen unmoved to the question of in what dress she should be presented!

Isabella was seated alone in the dining-room. Lady Anne and Louisa were gone out for a drive with Lady Penrhyn; and Helen and Georgiana accompanied Mary in her attempt at a walk in the gardens of Portman Square. Mr. Glentworth was therefore shown in to the young lady, who was busily employed at work, “Ah!” said he, on entering, “you are the very person I wanted; I am come to make my *amende* for leaving you out the other evening—I had not forgotten you.”

“Ah!” said Isabella, “you thought I was too young to know the value of money—that I should throw it away on coral necklaces and piping bulfinches.”

Mr. Glentworth smiled, and, half taking a red morocco case out of his pocket, said, "I thought that I could give you what you would like better."

"Nothing," interrupted Isabella, eagerly, who had not noticed his movement—"nothing that I should like half so well."

"My dear child," said he, seriously, even sadly, "you seem to set an undue value on money for one so young; what can you care for money, except for the sake of trifles which, believe me, are of no real value!"

"It is not for the sake of all that Howell and James have in their shop, or Storr and Mortimer besides, that I care for money. I know its value only too well. Money has been the curse of our lives; it is the want of money that keeps poor Mary like a ghost. Had she been rich, she would have escaped that early disappointment, which fell upon her like a blight, and from which she has had no change to distract her thoughts; she is country-bred, and she pines like a caged bird in London. It is want of money that keeps Louisa wasting her best days in fruitless hopes, that will leave her with a step as sad, and a cheek as pale, as that of her elder sister. It is want of money that will fall over Helen and Georgiana like a curse: they will go into society only to repress every warm and kindly feeling—to dread the approach of affection, unless it takes what is called an eligible shape. Their future fate hangs on a chance; if it goes against them, they will be blamed for the failure; but I really have

not courage to fancy mamma with all her daughters unmarried.”

“Lady Anne is very anxious, then, for your establishment?” said her listener.

“I can remember nothing else,” replied Isabella, “ever held forth in the future, but a good match. It may be wrong for a girl like myself to talk so freely: but who can help reflecting on what passes every day before her eyes?”

“It is not many, though, who do reflect,” thought Mr. Glentworth, while Isabella went on.

“There are very few happy marriages; indifference on the part of the husband, and dislike on that of the wife, appear to me the general feeling. Yet there are some exceptions; and these led me to think, why should they be happier than their fellows? I always found the cause the same—they married from different motives. There was affection and respect for each other to begin with. But let a coronet, properly accompanied, be offered to any of my sisters, mamma would not hear of a refusal. Neither character, temper, and taste, still less attachment, would be taken into consideration; and, yet, without them how can there be happiness in married life! Georgiana’s sweet nature will be perverted; all that is vain and frivolous in her will be brought out; she will constantly be disappointed in the vain endeavour to make pleasure a substitute for content, and, craving for excitement. Vain and heartless, the world will leave us little trace of

the lovely mind as of the lovely face. For Helen there is a yet darker doom; her imagination exaggerates every suffering; her keen feelings cannot lie dormant—she needs to love and be loved; amusement never can be to her the sole business of life—she requires to be interested. What can a future, where love is not, offer to her?” She paused, for her eyes had filled with tears, and, to conceal them, she stooped over her work.

“You do not,” said Mr. Glentworth, after a brief pause, “speak of your elder sisters, or of yourself.”

“Alas!” replied Isabella, “you must have perceived that Mary is heart and spirit-broken; and Louisa is in a fair way of being the same: ‘hope deferred maketh the heart sick.’ As to myself, as mamma often says, I am not pretty; I have not, therefore, the same brilliant chances of marriage that my sisters have.”

Mr. Glentworth was for a moment silent with surprise at the air of entire conviction with which this was said; the next, he could not help looking at the girl who so quietly avowed that she was not pretty. He did not think it necessary, however, to state that his own opinion was different, so he went on with the conversation.

“You prefer, then, having the money to the ornaments which I had intended for you?”

“Oh! the hundred pounds, certainly,” exclaimed Isabella, colouring a little at the idea of trespassing on the donor’s generosity.

“ You shall have it, then,” said Mr. Glentworth.

“ But,” cried Isabella, eagerly, “ it must be on conditions, and you may not like them.”

“ Let me hear what they are,” replied her companion.

“ First, that you will not tell mamma that you have given it ; and, secondly, that you will not ask me what I have done with it.”

Mr. Glentworth took out his pocket-book, and placed a hundred pound note in Isabella’s hands. “ It is a sum,” said he, seriously, “ that, properly employed, would be a source of happiness to many. I give it you without the least fear that it is misplaced. We have quite talked the morning away,” added he, without allowing her time for the thanks which she was trying to put into shape. “ I must leave my message with you. You must tell your sisters that I have a box at the theatre for to-morrow night, and that it is large enough for us all.” He left Isabella breathless with delight. As far as the selfish pleasure went, the box at the theatre was even greater enjoyment than the possession of the hundred pound note.

CHAPTER IX.

Louisa Granard was seated in her own room, writing what the size of the paper implied was a small note—not so, if it was to be judged by the length of time which the note took writing. Yet the employment seemed a pleasant one; her cheek was flushed with a clear, rich crimson—her face

“Was like any fair lake that the morning is on,
When it breaks into dimples, and laughs in the sun.”

And if, ever and anon, the brow was clouded by a shade of pensiveness, it was quickly dispelled by the consciousness of present happiness. A letter was open beside her, to whose contents it seemed necessary often to refer; but, when once taken up to read, it was not easily laid down again; and the fair student seemed to dwell on every word, and find out a new meaning each time. The fact was, Louisa Granard was answering a love-letter. Few there are whose hearts have not beat with delicious quickness at sight of a handwriting dearer than aught else in the world besides.

The first love-letter is an epoch in love's happy season—it makes assurance doubly sure—that which has hitherto, perhaps, only found utterance in sweet and

hurried words, now seems to take a more tangible existence. A love-letter is a proof of how dearly, even in absence, you are remembered. I once heard a young friend regret her approaching marriage, because she would then receive no more charming notes. Alas! the charming notes are not the only charming things that are no more. But a love-letter!—how much of life's most perfect happiness do those two words contain! With what anxiety it is expected!—with what delight it is received!—it seems almost too great a pleasure to open it. Suddenly we mock ourselves for the charmed delay—the seal is hastily broken—the contents eagerly devoured; then it is read slowly, dwelling on every sentence to lengthen out its enjoyment; how sweet does every little word of endearment appear!—what importance is attached to the choice of an epithet, to the turn of a phrase! Through the whole day, with what a conscious thrill its possession is recalled!—with what care it is read over at night, till its contents mingle with our dreams! I often wonder, when I see people settled down in that cold calmness, too often the atmosphere around the domestic hearth, whether they ever recall the words they used to say, and the letters they used to write! Would those letters appear absurd and exaggerated, or would they for a moment bring back the old feeling, or, at all events, a tender regret for its departure?

Louisa was, however, at the first and happiest time; her engagement was of that most harassing kind, where,

too poor to marry, lovers are obliged to trust the future with all those hopes which the present denies ; still, the consciousness of loving and being beloved was satisfaction enough. They were young enough both to wait, and to look forward with all the confidence in fate and each other that youth, and youth only, can feel. Oh ! it takes many disappointments, both in faith and fortune, before the human heart, naturally so buoyant and so confiding, learns to despond and to distrust. Charles Penrhyn, for he was the object of Louisa's preference, had expectations — that term, so vague when those expectations depend upon others. When Lord, then Mr. Penrhyn, married a distant relative of his own, pretty and portionless, he expressly protested against any hopes that her family might form. Still, when one dying off after another left only the youngest an orphan, it became a needful sacrifice to public opinion to do something for a relative who people in general would consider as having a claim upon him. A situation was therefore found for Charles in the Foreign Office—immediate provision was thus secured, and there was some talk of pushing him forward in the diplomatic line. But Lord Penrhyn, being able to talk of what he had done for his brother-in-law, was in no hurry to do more ; besides, he soon found that Charles was exceedingly useful in looking over his accounts, letters, &c.—he was a private secretary in all but the salary—while the young man was delighted at the opportunity of proving his gratitude ;

besides, there is a moral pride about useful occupation. But there is sometimes a danger in being too useful; and Charles Penrhyn had found that his very services precluded their reward; he was too valuable to Lord Penrhyn to be spared to a wider and more profitable sphere of action. Still he hoped that in time his services would give him a claim; and, till he met Louisa Granard, he was careless when the time might actually come.

But a serious and earnest attachment brought with it serious and earnest thoughts. He began to picture to himself a very different life to that which he had hitherto led—a life of active duties, whose reward had reference to another. The novelty of society was over, and, with it, much of its attraction; and he thought that, instead of perpetual operas, concerts, and balls, many pleasant evenings might be passed in a quiet home, with one rational and affectionate companion. On his present income it would be insanity to marry; but, let him once obtain a moderate independence, with the prospect of increase, and he knew that both Louisa and himself would be content to make many sacrifices, or what would be called such, in their circle. He felt that he had a right to claim further assistance from Lord Penrhyn; and his letter to Louisa announced his intention of doing so that very day. Louisa read and re-read the precious pages, and had just finished a few lines, or rather what had originally been intended to be a few lines, of encouragement and affection. These

few lines, however, had extended to the second sheet of paper. Oh! if it be delightful to receive a letter, it is as delightful to answer it. At first there is the timidity which trembles to express what yet it is so sweet to acknowledge—gradually the words fall, for the heart is too full for silence, and it is easier to write than to speak; one gentle assurance strengthens the other, and the close of the letter is always more tender than the beginning.

Louisa had just sealed her note, and was indulging herself in a last glance at that of her lover's, when a light tap was heard at the door. To hide the letter, blush deeply, and say "come in," were the work of a moment; but the rosy colour was yet warm when Isabella entered. "Do not mind me," said Isabella, smiling. "I shall not tell any body that you are writing to Charles Penrhyn."

Louisa stood, the image of confusion, and it was some minutes before she recovered breath to say—"However did you find out my secret?"

"Not so difficult as you may imagine, my dear sister," replied the other; "it is my nature to observe. If I had not seen the note Charles Penrhyn placed for you the other morning, mamma would have had it instead of yourself."

"I fear I am very wrong," whispered Louisa.

"I do not think so," replied Isabella. "If we were treated with only half the kindness that Mrs. Palmer shows to her husband's children, such an af-

fection would be to me a sacred bond against even an approach to deception. Ah! Louisa, dear, I often think how happy, how very happy, must those children be who possess the confidence and love of their parents! I feel as if there were no hardships that would not be light under such circumstances—how much happier we are for loving each other! But you know as well as I do, that what I am saying would appear nonsense to mamma. She looks upon us as so much merchandise, to be disposed of to the best bidder. Marriage is with her only a certain position in society. She never thinks whether it would make us happier or better. I certainly wish that you had become attached to some one in more independant circumstances than Mr. Penrhyn; but I do believe that sincere affection will sweeten every difficulty.”

“Lord Penrhyn can and ought to do something for his brother-in-law,” said Louisa, “and Charles is to speak to him this very evening.”

“I am glad of it,” replied Isabella; “whenever any thing disagreeable has to be done, the sooner it is done the better. Difficulties are always exaggerated by dwelling upon them.”

The two sisters now entered into a long and confidential conversation, most delightful to Louisa, who had a natural and girlish pleasure in dwelling upon the merits of her lover, which seemed more than confirmed by Isabella’s approval. The restraint she had imposed upon the expression of her feelings was doubly painful to one of her timid and candid temper.

“ You cannot think what a punishment it has been for my fault,” said she ; “ the reserve I have thought myself obliged to maintain—how many of your kind words have seemed to me so many reproaches. I was keeping a secret from those who kept none from me. But I was acting without mamma’s sanction, and did not like to implicate my sisters.”

“ You were right,” replied Isabella, “ and I should not have surprised your confidence, had I not had something I wished to say. I know what you mean to do with Mr. Glentworth’s gift—a marriage would scarcely be one without wedding-dresses—he has been equally generous to me, and you must keep the money till it is wanted, which, I hope, will be soon.” So saying, affectionately kissing her, she vanished, without giving Louisa time for either objections or thanks.

Every age has its characteristic, and our present one is not behind its predecessors in that respect ; it is the age of systems, every system enforced by a treatise. The politician who opposes the corn-laws and advocates free trade, does so on a system, which, as soon as it begins to work, will set the civilized world to rights. The phrenologist, who regulates heart and mind by undulations of the skull, has another system. The professor of animal magnetism, who throws housemaids into a deep sleep, when they talk Latin without knowing it, has a third. While Mrs. Geary, who makes stays the realization of the ancient girdle of the Graces, does so on a “ system which has the approval of the

highest medical authorities." One system, however, still requires its organization and its treatise;—we allude to the sublime, yet delicate, the universal, yet domestic science of managing a husband. The science has its practice, but it lacks its theory. Theory follows the practice which it improves. Aristotle found his examples of poetry in Homer and Eschylus; and Ude's dishes had made the felicity of dinners, before either reduced their divine art to received and written rules. Conjugal government requires its treatises. A young woman setting out in life lacks a printed guide. Her cookery-book, however, may afford some useful hints till one be actually directed to the important subject just mentioned. Many well-known receipts are equally available for a *batterie de cuisine* or *du cœur*. Your roasted husband is subdued by the fire of fierce words and fiercer looks—your broiled husband, under the pepper and salt of taunt and innuendo—your stewed husband, under the constant application of petty vexations—your boiled husband dissolves under the watery influences—while your confectionized husband goes through a course of the blanc mange of flattery, or the preserves and sweets of caresses and smiles.

"So you are quite decided on not purchasing those lovely inlaid tables?" said Lady Penrhyn, as she stepped into her carriage, accompanied by her husband.

"Quite," replied Lord Penrhyn; "our drawing-rooms are already so crowded that it is much as one's neck is worth to walk across them."

Lady Penrhyn made no reply, and soon afterwards asked "What o'clock is it?" in the most indifferent tone of voice in the world.

"We shall get home in time to dress for dinner," was her husband's not very direct reply, though it indicated the tone of his thoughts. Lord Penrhyn never could bear to wait for his dinner. It was ready to be served the instant of their arrival; yet, rapid as were the proceedings of the well-trained cook and butler, Lady Penrhyn was equally rapid with her toilette; neither soup nor fish grew cool from her delay. It was really quite pleasant to see a wife so attentive to her husband as was Lady Penrhyn, during the progress of the repast.

"I cannot allow you to try yonder temptation," said she, removing, with a pretty assumption of authority, a dish which she knew he disliked; "but I must recommend these fillets to your left—they are perfect."

Little conversation took place during dinner—the process was too important to be interrupted by frivolous discourse—but, as the dessert came in, her ladyship began to narrate, and very amusingly, one or two anecdotes of the day. Gradually, as his lordship approached the pleasant repose of his third glass of port, her voice ceased; he looked up to discover the cause of her unusual silence, and found that his wife's face was buried in the depths of a cambric pocket-handkerchief. She was crying. Lord Penrhyn had the cha-

racter to support of an excellent husband ; it was unpleasant to be disturbed in the first approaches of that sleep so conducive to digestion ; but he could not see his wife in tears, without an inquiry as to their cause. She abandoned to him her passive hand, but it was some time before her grief found words.

“ Ah ! Penrhyn,” at last she exclaimed, in the sweetest of reproachful whispers, “ what have I done to lose your love ?” Her most innocent feeling stood aghast. “ I remember the time,” continued the weeping lady, “ when the least wish of mine was sufficient.”

“ I am sure,” exclaimed her bewildered auditor, “ I do every thing I can to please you.”

“ Yet,” resumed his wife, “ how harshly you refused me those tables to-day !”

“ Is that all ?” said Lord Penrhyn.

“ All !” said her ladyship, her grief taking a slight tone of resentment ; “ is it not enough for me to find that you no longer care for any wish of mine ?”

“ My dearest Julia,” exclaimed the relieved husband, “ you shall have the tables.”

“ I do not care for them ; I would not have them now,” cried Lady Penrhyn ; “ it is only your affection I care for. Do not suppose, for a moment, that I wish for the tables when you do not : oh, no ! my only concern was for your indifference. But I am content if you tell me I was mistaken.”

“ Mistaken indeed, my dear love,” returned his lordship, “ if you thought me indifferent. You shall have the tables to-morrow.”

“No, no,” cried she, “I was very foolish; all I cared about in the matter was your feeling towards myself.” A kiss of reconciliation settled the matter, and Lord Penrhyn again composed himself in his most composing arm-chair.

“What an expensive thing marriage is!” was his latest reflection—*Nota Bene*. The tables were sent in next morning; at first objected to, but afterwards submitted to remain in compliance with, and as a mark of submission to, her husband’s will.

It was fated, however, that Lord Penrhyn was to court “Tired nature’s (and temper’s), sweet restorer, balmy sleep,” in vain that night; for before he relaxed himself into repose from his contemplation of the expence that marriage had brought on his devoted head and purse, a loud rap came to the door, and Charles Penrhyn entered into the dinner-room. He had some business about which he wished to speak to his young relative, and on that account he roused himself up; business which, with an Englishman, is predominant over even rest and digestion.

“And now,” said Charles, the discussion being at an end, “will you let me speak a little on my own business?”

“Your business!” exclaimed Lord Penrhyn; “what possible business can you have?”

“Why, not much at present,” returned the other; “and that is the very cause of my speaking. I wish to have more. The fact is, I want something to do.

I feel every day, more and more, that I am wasting my time, and whatever ability I may chance to possess."

"Do you find the last mentioned commodity get much in your way?" asked Lord Penrhyn, with a civil sneer.

The young man swallowed down his annoyance, and continued, "I am now eight-and-twenty, and it seems to me time that I should think a little of the future; what chance have I otherwise of looking forward to a home, or to independence?"

"A home! interrupted his hearer; "why this house is as good as a home to you; you are always sure of a dinner here."

"A dinner, sir," persisted Charles, "does not, in my idea, quite constitute a home."

"And, pray, what does constitute your idea of a home?"

"Its duties and its ties," replied the other; "a fireside made cheerful by affection."

"By these neatly-turned phrases," exclaimed his lordship, "I conclude that your idea of a home includes that of a wife."

"It certainly does," replied his young relative.

"Charles," said Lord Penrhyn, solemnly, "I have, on more than one occasion, had reason to think you a sensible young man; either I was mistaken, or you are suddenly gone mad."

"Did you think yourself mad?" asked Mr. Penrhyu, "when you married my sister?" His lordship looked as if half tempted to confess that he held such

to have been the case ; apparently, he considered that such an avowal would be misplaced to his dear Julia's brother ; and he contented himself with observing, " I was in very different circumstances. I could afford the expense of a wife, and the expense is enormous. Why Julia's diamond necklace alone, that she wore at the last drawing-room, cost two thousand guineas."

" I should marry a woman," replied Julia's brother, " who would be satisfied without any diamonds at all."

" And where," asked his lordship, " do you expect to find such a phoenix ? Have you found some piece of rural simplicity, whom you have persuaded that nothing is so becoming as a few wild flowers placed carelessly in the hair ? Both she and you will soon find out the difference. Believe me, all women are alike."

" I cannot agree with you," eagerly interrupted the lover."

" I did not expect you to agree with me ; no single man ever agrees with a married man on such a subject. Hope and experience take two different sides of an argument. Marriage is the greatest act of folly that a man can commit ; he ought at least to put it off as long as possible."

" Delays are dangerous," said Charles ; " I may perhaps never get married at all."

" And no harm if you never do," replied his brother-in-law ; " greater misfortunes may befall you than that. No, no ! I set myself against this sudden whim

of marrying. What is a wife but a pretended stumbling-block in the man's path, who has his way to make in the world?"

"I should rather say," exclaimed Charles, "a wife would be a perpetual stimulus to exertion and to perseverance."

"The expenses of married life," said Lord Penrhyn, rather thinking his own thoughts aloud than answering, "are awful. I have often thought that women were superfluities in creation. There is, of course," added he, suddenly recollecting himself, "an exception in favour of your dear sister."

Charles knew his brother-in-law well enough to see that any attempt to enlist Lord Penrhyn's kindness on his side was in vain; he therefore decided to try another plan, and the most direct appeared also the best. "Your opinion of the ill consequences of matrimony," said he, "have put out of my head what I called this evening about. Leaving my future wife till I find her, let me think of my actually existing self. I hear that the place of secretary of legation will soon be vacant at the court of——; will you use your interest to get me appointed?"

"I heard of this before," said his lordship, every feature growing more harsh than usual with denial, "but Sir Charles Neville is trying to procure it for his third son."

"Why," exclaimed Penrhyn, "he is utterly unfit for such a situation; Robert is but one remove from a fool."

“ I do not mean to say that he will obtain it, but I cannot use any influence to counteract Sir Charles’s interest ; for he is in the committee of our railroad bill, now passing the house ; and were I to oppose him, he would inevitably vote against me.” To this equitable arrangement Charles could give no answer, and with a heavy heart he followed his companion to the drawing-room : apparently, however, Lord Penrhyn could not satisfactorily dismiss the subject from his mind, for while stirring his second cup of coffee he said,

“ Do you know, Julia, that Charles has taken some wild-goose fancy into his head about marrying ?”

“ Why, what heiress have you picked up ?” asked his sister. “ I am sure that I am very glad of it, though I cannot form a guess who it is. I never knew a season so unprofitable in that respect as the present.”

“ An heiress, Charles !” cried Lord Penrhyn ; “ that alters my view of the whole matter ; why could you not tell me ?”

“ I could not,” replied Charles, “ tell you what did not exist. I only spoke of the matter generally,” added he, very little desirous that his sister should form a guess of how matters stood ; it would inevitably lead to his losing his chief opportunity of improving his situation.

“ A great heiress is certainly a temptation,” continued his sister.

“ I tell you, there is no heiress in the case,” in-

errupted Charles. "I only said to Lord Penrhyn, that at my age a man begins to think of his future, and of settling in life."

"Settling in folly!" cried Lady Penrhyn. "I hate to hear young men talk of marrying; they are lost to all intents and purposes. Half the pleasant houses open to you while single, would be shut when you are double. Who do you think would care to waltz or to sing with you if you were once married?"

"I am glad to find, my dear," said Lord Penrhyn, "how completely we always agree." Charles saw the fruitlessness of saying more on the subject. From his sister he could hope for no sympathy, and from her husband no help."

"So," muttered he, bitterly, as he sought his lodgings, "I must not think of affection and independence, because my sister holds that no one would care to flirt with me if I were married, and because my brother-in-law will not risk losing a vote on a question which only involves a few hundreds that he would not miss if he threw them to-morrow into the fire. I wish that I had only a small portion of his wealth. I think, I hope, that I should make a better use of it." So we all think till the time comes, and then, whether wealth bring the curse of selfishness along with it, or that the leaven was in our nature, only dormant till called forth by circumstances, we are only too apt to misuse it, even as others have done before us.

CHAPTER X.

Nothing could exceed the satisfaction of the Misses Granard in such an acquisition as Mr. Glentworth proved to their circle. Pleasures they had hitherto only known by name, they now shared in common with the other young people. The exhibitions were a source of delight inexhaustible; and the drive in the open carriage, which had at first been offered to Mary as the invalid, had, without neglecting her, been gradually extended to all her sisters. Mrs. Palmer, to whom the girls had made a little *fête* of introducing their new acquaintance, was delighted with him. She felt, with the quick sympathy of a generous nature, that her young friends had gained a valuable and steady friend.

“Poor things! they needed it,” said she one night to her husband, during the discussion of some scalloped oysters, over which their mutual confidences usually took place.

“Mr. Glentworth is rather young and handsome,” replied Mr. Palmer, “to be the intimate friend of so many pretty girls. My daughter Charlotte said to me this very morning that she only hoped good might

come of it. I wish he would make up his mind, and marry one of them."

"I wish he would," answered Mrs. Palmer; "it would be a blessing to all the sisters if one of them were well married. But the idea of marrying I do not think has ever entered his head. He does not appear to me to have a preference; he looks upon them as children, and if they were his own he could not be kinder to them."

"I have not," continued Mr. Palmer, "told you all Mrs. Gooch observed. 'I am sure,' said she, 'that Isabella is in love with him; she blushes whenever his name is mentioned; and the other evening I saw she started whenever he spoke to her; and you know how ready she is to talk in general; she is shy and timid while speaking to him.' Now Charlotte said this, and there is not much that she lets pass her."

Mrs. Palmer remained silent: her first impulse was to exclaim, "What nonsense!" her next was to think that the remark had more truth for its foundation than she liked to acknowledge even to herself. She, too, remembered, now that her attention was drawn to the matter, divers very suspicious blushes and starts, and together with this came the even strengthened conviction of Mr. Glentworth's indifference. "Poor thing!" said she, unconsciously aloud, "she is a kind, good—"

"And pretty girl," interrupted her husband. "I

would take an even bet on her chance of catching the nabob."

Mr. Glentworth had never quitted Europe, and his wealth was either good English landed property, or equally undeniable English consols; still he was a stranger, very rich, and suddenly come from abroad. Such a man was necessarily a nabob in Mr. Palmer's eyes. India had been the place for making large fortunes in his young days. Mrs. Palmer, though her wishes went along with his prediction, could not believe it, with a full, entire, and comfortable belief, so she took refuge in a general phrase, "Well, I shall hope for the best." Still her satisfaction in the Granards having acquired such a valuable friend was greatly qualified, it would be dearly purchased if the price of happiness.

There was, also, another person who was any thing but content at the way in which things were going on, and that was Lady Anne Granard. Days, weeks, had glided by since the memorable dinner-party, and Mr. Glentworth had not only not made any of her daughters an offer, but seemed to have no intention of ever making one. True, he added largely to the enjoyments of the girls; but that was a point on which she was perfectly indifferent. True, he was in the habit of making them magnificent presents, but the shapes which they took were very unacceptable to her ladyship—books, music, drawings, were trash in her eyes; a new dress, or a pretty or-

nament would have appeared to her the more rational exercise of his liberality. Had he been older, she might have calculated on his death and its attendant legacies ; that was, however, out of the question : she could not look forward to the death of one some years younger than herself. From thinking him useless, Lady Anne soon began to consider him detrimental ; his constant attendance kept off others.

On this point her penetration was assisted by a sneer or two of Lady Penrhyn's, who, struck with Mr. Glentworth's appearance, had accepted the invitation to join a family party to Richmond, only to find attention devoted to those Granard girls, as she called them. Like all married women, who make flirtation the sole business of life, she had a natural antipathy to the young, pretty, and unmarried. While she affected to despise the simplicity and want of finish in the perhaps blushing and embarrassed girl, she was, in reality, the rival that she most dreaded. A deep and sincere attachment was the first thing that taught a man to set a just value on the flutter of gratified vanity, in which her power consisted. Besides, she envied her the bloom and freshness, which she had lost for ever—the bloom and freshness of the heart, even more than the cheek. Intimate as she was with Lady Anne, she would not but see how little the Misses Granard had of the ordinary pleasures of their age — but it never entered into her head to add to them—had one of their sweet

faces been seen in her box at the opera, it might have attracted that attention she was feverishly covetous of engrossing.

Time and prosperity had hardened Lady Penrhyn's into an intensely selfish nature — it had never been softened by affection, or purified by sorrow— her course of worldly prosperity had been unbroken, and she had neither the experience of suffering, nor the native sympathy of a kindly temper, which makes us enter into the feelings of others. She spoke of misfortunes as if they had been faults ; and poverty, sickness, or disappointment, appeared to her quite inexcusable. She could not endure that five uninformed girls should engross so handsome and so distinguished looking a man as Mr. Glentworth, though she had quite penetration enough to perceive that his kindness was that of a parent, and equally extended to all. Still, it was not to be borne, and she well knew from what quiver to select her arrow.

“ Pray,” said she, during her next morning visit in Welbeck Street, “ when, and on which of your daughter's marriage with Mr. Glentworth, am I to congratulate you ? What a fortunate connexion !”

Lady Anne, with whom long knowledge of the world often supplied the place of sense, was too guarded to admit her disappointment, and calmly replied, “ Mr. Glentworth is only a very old friend of the family.”

“ Not so very old,” said Lady Penrhyn, with a

malicious smile; "I should rather say much too young to be trusted with so many girls — you will have them all in love with him."

"I trust," answered Lady Anne, with a quiet air of security, "that my girls have been too well brought up to think of such nonsense as falling in love."

"At all events," said her companion, and this time she sent the shaft to the mark, "they will have the credit of being so, and consider how very much such a report will be in the way of their settling. A dangler like Mr. Glentworth, who means nothing, keeps off those who would be more desirable."

Her ladyship soon afterwards took her leave, but not with her departed the doubts and fears she had left in Lady Anne's mind, and who should meet Lady Penrhyn on the stairs, but Mr. Glentworth. "Not for the world," exclaimed she, declining his offered escort to the carriage; "I will not keep you one moment from your nest of sucking doves. To which of them do you mean at last to throw the handkerchief?" and, humming the air of "*Colin sait-il choiser*," she left him without time to reply.

On entering the drawing-room, he found Lady Anne alone. Never very cordial in her manner, to-day it was even frozen. He inquired after the young ladies, and received the information that they were walking. Conversation here stopped from indifference on the part of Mr. Glentworth, and preoccupa-

tion on that of Lady Anne, who was secretly planning a very desperate measure — nothing less than that of hinting to the old friend of the family that his visits ought in future to be “like those of angels, few and far between.” This was more easily resolved than effected, not that Lady Anne had any tender misgivings, prompted by the recollection of much kindness, but Mr. Glentworth was too rich to be affronted lightly—an offer was not hopeless—and presents floated in the foreground, while legacies dimly filled the perspective in the distance. Moreover, she was afraid of him: the strong mind and the decided temper exercised their usual control over the weak and the irritable. A mother with a touch of sentiment might have talked with great effect of young and susceptible feelings, and have wound up with maternal anxiety for the happiness of her daughters. This was a view of the case that never occurred to Lady Anne—the heart was with her wholly, *hors de combat*—she only looked to the establishment, and the more she considered the matter, the more grave she considered the danger the said establishments were incurring.

Making a strong effort, she said at last, “Mr. Glentworth, I have for some time been wishing to speak to you.” Of course her companion became at once attentive, and she, gaining courage at the sound of her own voice, went on. “You must be aware of what great importance it is to me to see my girls settled in life. Mr. Granard’s imprudence ——.”

Mr. Glentworth felt inclined to interrupt her with "your ladyship's, do you not mean?" but he refrained, and she proceeded.

"Mr. Granard's imprudence having left his children completely unprovided for, their marriage is of the utmost consequence. Will you pardon me for observing that your acquaintance, otherwise so fortunate, and so agreeable, will, I fear, be an obstacle to my natural expectations on that point."

Mr. Glentworth looked what he was, amazed, and Lady Anne went on.

"You are not a marrying man," this was said with some still lurking hope that it might bring from him a declaration completely the reverse of her own, but it was heard in acquiescing silence. "Now everybody," continued Lady Anne, "is not aware of this fact, and your being so constantly seen with my girls leads to the supposition that you must be attracted by one or other of them. I am constantly being asked which of the Misses Granard is to be Mrs. Glentworth?"

"Gossiping nonsense," exclaimed the gentleman; "why can you not at once say that I am one of their father's oldest friends, and that I am anxious to show his children some portion of the kindness which he showed me."

"People are not easily," replied Lady Anne, "persuaded to believe what is improbable."

“Improbable!” exclaimed Mr. Glentworth; “what is there improbable in affection and gratitude?”

“I really,” returned the other with a sneer, “cannot agree about probabilities or improbabilities, but I know what the generality will think when they see a gentleman constantly with five very pretty girls, and I also know what they will say.”

“It is amazing to me,” said Mr. Glentworth, “that your acquaintances should give themselves so much trouble to settle those affairs in which they precisely have the least concern.”

“Suppose, as you have nothing better to do,” cried Lady Anne, who was getting angry that the conversation held out no prospect of what she would have considered a satisfactory termination, “you set about reforming society altogether; but, till you succeed, you excuse me for not setting its opinions at defiance; and, I must say, that as you do not mean to marry one of the girls yourself, it is very hard that you should stand in the way of those who might.”

“I am, therefore,” said Mr. Glentworth, rising from his seat, “to consider it your wish that our acquaintance should terminate?”

“By no means,” exclaimed Lady Anne, who began to be a little alarmed at what she had done, and who saw presents and legacies in the act of disappearing for ever. “I am sure that we have all the most sincere regard for you, and are delighted to see you; but we must have some little regard for the opinions of the world.”

“And, in compliance,” said Mr. Glentworth, “with that opinion, you wish to decline my acquaintance?”

“No such thing, my dear sir,” replied her ladyship, in the blindest of tones: “I only refer to your own excellent judgment as to the propriety of making your attentions in public less marked, and your visits less frequent.”

“Good morning, Lady Anne,” said Mr. Glentworth, as he turned to the door; “do, pray, tell the world that I am too insignificant a person for its notice; and, above all, do assure yourself that I shall try as much as possible to avoid its notice.” Lady Anne rose up with a host of pretensions on her lips, but Mr. Glentworth was gone. “*Les ondits sont le gazette des foux*,” thought he, as he descended the staircase. The saying is true enough; still, it admits of a question whether such a gazette can be altogether disregarded, for “*les foux*” have, at all events, the majority on their side.

The sight of Mrs. Palmer at her window induced Mr. Glentworth to try if a visit to the kind-hearted old lady would not be a safety-valve for his present mood of irritation; besides, it would be pleasant to have some one agree with him in cordial dislike to Lady Anne’s system of small yet selfish manœuvres. Nothing could be more old-fashioned, yet nothing could seem more cheerful than Mrs. Palmer’s drawing-room. The furniture was the same when she married, and belonged to the spider-school. The legs

of the tables were so thin, it was a marvel how they supported them; the chairs were high-backed and upright, and as hard as stuffing could make them; the sofas were ditto; while the tables, supported by the spiral legs, were of shapes wholly vanished from the modern upholsterer. There was a card, a sofa, and one oval-shaped table, with a drawer, and leaves that let up and down; all bearing that high polish, which made it the boast of the old-fashioned school that you could make the mahogany serve as a mirror. It would have made half a human existence, the hours of rubbing bestowed by footmen and housemaid on those shining surfaces.

The salmon-coloured walls were covered with divers specimens of feminine ingenuity—samplers, whose subjects it was a puzzle to guess; but the “Fanny,” “Mary,” and “Elizabeths” worked at the bottom, were distinct enough. I never was more struck with the disrepute into which these laborious trifles had fallen, than by one day finding an old and valued friend unpicking the one, on which the temple of Solomon had been worked in many colours, for a knife-cloth. It was a farewell to the last graceful vanity of youth. Beside these samplers hung divers fruit-pieces worked in worsted and flower pieces worked in floss-silk; also two or three drawings. All these had belonged to Claver House; they had been worked by the young ladies, and many a bright young face did they recall. There was also a round mirror, with

candles and glass-drops on either side, and a chained bird trying to fly away on the top—no marvel, then, he attempted to fly from the image reflected in the glass, which gave you your face with the same likeness as does a silver spoon. Our grandfathers certainly hung these said mirrors as correctives, not incentives, to vanity. There were also two paintings in oil, half-length likenesses of Mr. and Mrs. Palmer: both were seated, he with part of a table on his side, on which stood a decanter, a liquor-stand, and half a dish of oranges; while his lady had a similar table, but decorated with the exact likeness of her best set of china tea-things. This was a perpetual grievance to Mrs. Gooch, and, indeed, to the other daughters: if, as they observed, papa had had a book in his hand, and mamma had a basket of flowers, there could have been no objection. But Mr. Palmer had always been accustomed to his own way; and he would have it in this instance. He chose that these pictures should represent his wife and himself, at what was their time of greatest enjoyment.

The only representatives of to-day, were two large and comfortable arm-chairs, and a few elegant-looking trifles, the work of the Misses Granard. Still there was a cheerful appearance; a capital fire burnt in the bright grate; there were some stands of thriving plants in the windows; and some canaries and Java sparrows chirped as if they were quite content to be “hereditary bondsmen.”

Mrs. Palmer was seated knitting—that comfortable sort of work, which requires so little attention, and so little eyesight. Nothing could be more placid or more benevolent than her countenance — she was a very pretty old woman—and the close, white lace-cap, the dark silk gown, and the mittens, a style of costume she had worn for the last twenty years, seemed as if it had been invented expressly for her. She received Mr. Glentworth with even more than her usual kindness. There is nothing of which women are so susceptible as attention ; it is but a slight tribute, yet it is one paramount to secure the heart's allegiance. Now Mrs. Palmer felt that Mr. Glentworth's call was an attention—and such they had hitherto been ; but, to-day, it must be confessed, that he called more with reference to himself. Their conversation soon turned, as it always did, on “ those dear girls.” All the feminine romance—all the warm affection that Mrs. Palmer possessed, turned to her interesting neighbours. Her own daughters-in-law (she never used, nor even thought of, the epithet “ in-law”) were so comfortably married, lived so exactly from one year's end to another the same sort of life ; it was impossible to feel any anxiety about them. But the loveliness, the refinement, and the uncertain position of the young Granards interested at once her fears and her hopes, and both she and Mr Glentworth felt that they had one point in common when they talked over their youthful friends. It was not long before the

gentleman gave a full account of his interview with Lady Anne ; but it struck him that, while Mrs. Palmer quite agreed with him respecting the heartless selfishness which dictated such a view of the question, the view itself did not seem to her as so exceedingly absurd ; she hesitated, and seemed embarrassed, instead of giving the cordial assent to his finishing question of “ Now, did you ever hear of any thing more ridiculous, than the supposition of a love affair between myself and those children ? ”

“ You cannot call them children,” said Mrs. Palmer, at last.

“ They are such to me,” returned Mr. Glentworth.

“ You may think so,” replied the old lady.

“ And what on earth business,” exclaimed he, “ is it to any one else ? I am rich, and independent, and have not a tie or relative in the world. Who can object to my considering the family of my oldest friend as my own ? ”

“ I am not thinking,” said Mrs. Palmer, “ of people in general ; I am thinking of the girls themselves.”

“ Then you will agree with me,” interrupted Mr. Glentworth, “ in seeing the advantages that are derived from having a friend like myself. I procure for them many pleasures, from which they have hitherto been excluded. I induce them, by a judicious choice of books, to turn their attention to subjects hitherto neglected, for their education has been worthless.”

“Not quite,” said Mrs. Palmer; “they have had the education of privation, self-denial, and of doing the best under the circumstances in which they have been placed.”

“Well, certainly,” replied their friend, “the result has been most fortunate, for I never met such very sweet girls. But they are now arrived at an age when the character of themselves and their future is in the balance. What chance has it in the hands of the weak, the selfish, and the worldly Lady Anne? now their happiness is safe in mine.”

“Are you quite sure of that?” asked Mrs. Palmer.

“Quite sure, it would indeed be presumption to say,” answered he; “but I have it in my power to smoothe many worldly difficulties, and I could not be more anxious about their happiness, were I really their father.”

“I believe you,” said Mrs. Palmer, earnestly.

“A little ridiculous gossip, of which,” continued he, “a little time must show the fallacy, ought not to be weighed against the advantages of my sincere and disinterested affection. I will be their true friend and guide.”

“You are too young and too handsome for any such office,” interrupted Mrs. Palmer, who had for some time been nerving herself to the expression of her opinion; “and now, Mr. Glentworth, will you allow an old woman to offer you her judgment; mistaken it may be, but it is offered in all sincerity, and from great affection.”

“ I know no one,” replied her companion, “ whose opinion I should be more ready to take than your own.”

“ Has the danger,” said Mrs. Palmer, “ never recurred to you, that your kindness might be requited too tenderly ; in short, for I must speak plainly, that one or other of the girls would be sure to fall in love with you ?” Mr. Glentworth could safely protest that such an idea had never crossed his mind. “ What else could you expect ?” returned the old lady.

“ You do not mean to say that such is the case ?” exclaimed he, looking aghast at the supposition.

“ I will say as little as I can upon the subject,” replied Mrs. Palmer, “ but I again repeat that you are too young and too good-looking to be friend and guide to such very lovely girls.”

“ I thank you for your kindness,” said Mr. Glentworth, taking the old lady’s hand to bid her good-by. “ You may be right, and we will talk the subject over again ; but now I am unfit for more conversation.”

He wandered through the streets, anxious, confused, and equally discontented with himself and his morning’s conversation. He was roused from his reverie by a sweet voice exclaiming—

“ No, Mr. Glentworth, you shall not run over us ;” he looked up and saw the two youngest Misses Granard—it was Georgiana who spoke, but he could not help seeing that Isabella’s face was kindling with delight, though she addressed him more shyly than her sister. The day before he would have walked with

them to their own door ; to-day he past on hurriedly, saying something about pressing business. He glanced round, after he had passed, with a mingled feeling of regret and affection ; but Isabella was looking back with an expression of sorrow and anxiety—a painful contrast to the radiant smile which had so recently lighted up her face—she caught his eye, and rapidly turned her head, but he saw that she blushed the deepest crimson.

CHAPTER XI.

Mr. Glentworth passed a very disagreeable fortnight before he called in Welbeck Street. Though, as both Lady Anne and Mrs. Palmer would impress upon his mind, he was "young and good-looking," he was past the age when the gay spirits find amusement in any thing. He missed the cheerful and yet rational evenings in Welbeck Street, when his mind felt its own powers, while striving to call forth those of others. He found the theatre dull, now he could no longer see the amusement which it gave reflected in the young faces by which he had lately been surrounded. He missed, too, more than all, the feeling that he was adding to the happiness of others. He caught himself wishing, a dozen times a day, that the Misses Granard had really been his daughters, or, at all events, his sisters. At length, he thought a sufficient lapse of time had gone by to make his visit suit even Lady Anne's idea of *les bienséances*; and, as to Mrs. Palmer's suggestion, it must be owned he thought of it as little as he could; and, when he did, it was to think that the best course was to mark, by his kindness to each, that there was no individual preference.

“Lady Anne is at home, but the young ladies are out, walking,” was the answer of the page; but, in the drawing-room, he found Isabella alone. Languid and dispirited, she had declined accompanying her sisters, and was employed in copying a drawing. It was a sketch of Mr. Glentworth’s, and he had been describing the scene, the last evening that he spent in Welbeck Street. He caught sight of her face—it was unusually pale, and there was a glitter on the long, dark lash, and a dimness in the eye, as if tears had been recently shed. Not such was the countenance that turned and met his own. The dark eyes filled with light, a rich colour mantled the cheek, and smiles surrounded the lip, whose welcome was at first inaudible.

“How we have missed you!” exclaimed she. “Do you know that we have left the book you were reading to us in the middle — we could not bear to go on in your absence.” She did not add that this was her own suggestion.

“I have been much engaged,” replied Mr. Glentworth.

“I hope your engagements are over now,” said she; “we have grown so accustomed to you, that we cannot get on without you.”

“I fear,” said he, hesitatingly, “I shall soon be obliged to go abroad.” He was startled to see the effect of his own words in Isabella’s ashy paleness—she could not force a reply. But there is a timidity in genuine feeling, which brings with it an intuitive

desire of concealment; and she was soon able to add, "You have been so kind to us all." At this moment Mr. Glentworth's eye fell on a little pencilled sketch of himself. In her joy at seeing the original, Isabella had forgotten the copy. Again a bright scarlet passed over her face; and her companion, from that necessity of saying something which originates more subjects of conversation than any thing else, observed, "I did not know you had a talent for taking likenesses."

"I never tried before," said Isabella, hesitatingly.

"You ought to cultivate it," continued Mr. Glentworth. "Would you like to take some lessons?"

"No," replied his companion; and then hastily added, "I should have no interest, unless the face were one I knew."

Here, for the first time, the conversation languished. Isabella felt embarrassed, though she did not even surmise a cause, and Mr. Glentworth was thoughtful.

"Do you know," said she, after a long pause, "I fear I am ungrateful; for I feel quite sorry that we have known you. What shall we do when you go away?—At least," added she, in a subdued tone, "we shall never forget your kindness." But the effort at forced composure was too much for the young and unpractised girl—her voice became inaudible, and she burst into tears.

"My going is still uncertain," said Mr. Glentworth, trying to soothe her with the utmost kindness.

"Ah!" exclaimed she, "how much happier we

have been since you came—how much we owe to your kindness ! I had no idea that life could be so pleasant till we knew you ;” and again poor Isabella’s voice failed.

Mr. Glentworth rose, and took one or two turns up and down the room ; suddenly he caught Isabella’s eyes fixed upon him with such a look of wretchedness that his heart smote him. He thought on the lonely and unprotected state of such singularly lovely girls—he could not be blind to what Isabella’s feeling was to himself, so unconsciously, so innocently betrayed—he felt that he was not only their sole friend, but that he possessed the power to make that friendship available in many ways, while he was scarcely able to do so in their peculiar situation. A sudden impulse led to an equally sudden resolution—he took a seat by Isabella’s side, and took her little, cold, trembling hand in his own.

“ My dear girl,” said he, very kindly, “ I have a great deal to say to you. Will you listen to me, patiently ?”

Isabella’s eyes, even more than her words, assured him that her patience would be little tried while listening to him. “ Are you aware,” asked he, “ of why I have not been to see you during the last fortnight ?” His companion looked astonished. “ The fact is,” continued he, “ Lady Anne fears that my visits here may prove detrimental to what she considers your best interests. I thought myself an old, safe friend ;

but, as that cannot be explained to every body, she fears that I may keep off other and more eligible lovers." Isabella tried to speak, but the words died in utterance. "In short, whether I shall be obliged to give up visiting altogether depends upon yourself. As the husband of one of you, no exception could be taken. Tell me, truly, my dear, do you think that I could make *you* happy as my wife?" Isabella's eyes, that had hitherto been fixed on Mr. Glentworth's, half-wonder, half-regret, were now cast down—again a sweet colour mantled her cheek.

"Happy!" murmured a voice so low as to be almost inaudible—"Do you not make every one near you happy?" Could consent be given more graciously or more gracefully?—Mr. Glentworth felt that he had sealed his fate; he was dizzy, confused, and sought in vain to speak. Mechanically he retained the hand that trembled in his own—but Isabella needed no protestations—one word from his mouth had been enough, and she sat in silent "measureless content." She was yet too happy to wonder at her own good fortune.

"Isabella," exclaimed he, starting up, "I will write to you this evening; I cannot speak all I could wish; read my letter carefully; think before you decide. I shall send for the answer in the morning. God bless you!" Isabella held her breath to hear his last step; she sprang to the window, and watched long after he was out of sight; she then hurried into

their little back parlour ; she was too intensely happy to wish for any thing but solitude ; she felt as if she feared to wake from so delightful a dream.

Isabella loved Francis with the freshness of a sweet and child-like love, but also with a steadiness belonging to her character rather than to her years ; she had delighted in his presence, she had been wretched in his absence ; but it had never occurred to her that she was in love with him, still less did she think of him with reference to herself. It would have appeared to her far more probable, that if he were to prefer any, it would have been one of her sisters. I have heard it said that the gentleman's declaration should always precede the lady's attachment. This supposes a greater degree of vanity and of calculation than really do form part of feminine affection. A girl's love is half poetry, an unconscious preference till startled into self-knowledge. Isabella had been grateful for Mr. Glentworth's kindness — struck with his cultivated mind, and impressed with his distinguished appearance ; so were all her sisters ; but she alone was timid in expressing that admiration ; in her alone had they inspired that feeling, which, shy, vague, and tender, is love. Pretty, and of a prettiness likely to improve for many years to come ; lady-like, unusually clever, with a sweet temper, a warm, kind heart, wholly devoted to himself — not seventeen, Mr. Glentworth was fully justified in thinking himself the happiest of men. Whether he so considered himself or not, the following

letter may serve to show. Lady Anne was chaperoning three of the girls to a juvenile ball. Mary was never in any one's way, so that there was no restraint on Isabella's joy when she received Mr. Glentworth's letter. If ever this world contained a perfectly happy human being, it was Isabella Granard when she broke the seal, and began to read her long and closely-written epistle : —

“ My very dear Isabella (for such you will always be to me, whatever may be your decision after reading the following pages,)

“ Since I left Welbeck Street to-day, I have most seriously considered our mutual position. For both our sakes, I must be as explicit as possible ; and if I write more coldly than it may seem to you I ought, remember I write with the fear of your future before me. Though thoughtful far beyond your years, you are very inexperienced ; and I would not have a preference that may originate in your little knowledge of others, or a romantic exaggeration of slight kindnesses, lead you into a precipitate union with me, unless you most seriously examine your own heart, and weigh the various consequences. I am double your own age, my habits formed, my spirits saddened, and the life I would choose one of quiet and seclusion. I have loved before passionately, entirely, as none ever love twice. Hitherto that attachment, though hopeless, has kept me from forming other ties ; it might have done so, even unto the end, but for my late inti-

macy with your family — I must add, and with you. I feel that my home is lonely, uncheered by affection. I desire to have some one to love and to care for. I think I could make one even young as you are happy. I should watch over, and seek to screen your path even from the shadow of a sorrow. Knowing your affectionate temper, I feel that it would add to your happiness, having a home to offer any of your family. I think also that you would be happy in making me so. Sometimes I picture to myself a cheerful future, whose sunshine I shall owe to yourself, and then again I am discouraged.

“Do not decide hastily, consult any friend you please, think over your tastes and fancies, be even unreasonable in conjuring up objections, think of yourself while you decide. You will ever have an anxious and indulgent friend in

“Your truly affectionate

“FRANCIS GLENTWORTH.”

The letter dropped on the floor as Isabel raised her pale and bewildered face from its perusal. “He does not love me; he marries me out of pity to us all;” and her head dropped upon her arm, while the large tears dropped slowly through her clasped hands. “I must write,” exclaimed she, “and tell him how grateful I am, but that he need not think of marrying me.” She drew the paper towards her, but, instead of writing, she began to read his letter again. A shade of indecision passed over her face, and she read it over

for the third time. "I will go and ask Mrs. Palmer what I ought to do; but no," said she, "it is my own heart that must counsel me in this matter." For some time Isabella had sought to check her tears, but now she gave free course to them; they relieved, and the mood which they softened soon became elevated; tears smoothe the way for prayers.

"I may," said she, "be wrong; Heaven support and direct me! but my heart seems reassured. He says that his heart is lonely, and that I shall have a home for my sisters; should I not think of him and them rather than of myself?" Her cheek was pale as the marble of a gravestone, and her hand cold and trembling as she wrote the following answer: —

"You tell me I may consult a friend, and I will consult my oldest and my kindest — yourself. Tell me what to do, and, in order that you may advise, I will tell you what my feelings are. I am very grateful to you; and you say most truly 'that I should be happy in making you so;' but can I? As you answer that question to me, so do I answer to you. Accept the prayers and blessings of

"Your gratefully attached,

"ISABELLA GRANARD."

The note was duly sent for the next morning, and an answer returned in less than half an hour.

"My dearest Isabel, you can make me very happy, and to make you so will be my constant anxiety. I

shall call in an hour and speak (may I not?) to Lady Anne Granard.

“Ever your affectionate and grateful

“FRANCIS GLENTWORTH.”

Mr. Glentworth received his note while pacing up and down the library, where he had passed a night, given neither to study nor to sleep. He started when he saw the address — broke the seal, while the blood started from the firmly-compressed lip. He drew a deep breath; he was reassured by the shortness; till then he had not acknowledged, even to himself, how much he dreaded an acceptance. He read it, and, flinging himself into a chair, hid his face in his hands. “It is too late to repent!” exclaimed he, and wrote an answer. “Let me make her happy,” muttered he, “and then it matters not.” Francis Glentworth and Isabel Granard were both generous, high-minded, and disinterested; they were about to marry with the best intentions. Alas! best intentions are not the best things in the world to marry upon.

CHAPTER XII.

At three o'clock there was no chance of Lady Anne being visible soon, and Mr. Glentworth drove up to the door in Welbeck Street. The girls, who were assembled in the parlour, marvelled to hear him ask for Lady Anne only, while Isabella trembled like a leaf; fortunately she was seated a little apart; she had not said a syllable to her sisters; her spirits were too much oppressed for confidence. Lady Anne was not down, and they could hear Mr. Glentworth pacing overhead with quick and irregular steps.

“Do you know, I think Mr. Glentworth,” said Georgiana, “is going to make mamma an offer; this is their second *tête-à-tête*.”

“You do not think any such thing,” replied Helen. Lady Anne, at that moment, entered the drawing-room; she felt rather glad to see Mr. Glentworth; not being aware of his visit the day before, she had begun to fear that he really had taken it into his head to retire, and then who could foresee what he would do with his money?

“Our excellent friend Mr. Glentworth!” exclaimed she; “why, what a stranger you have been! you cannot think how the girls have missed you.”

“Surely, Lady Anne,” replied he, “you cannot have forgotten our last conversation.

“‘Who speaks so well should never speak in vain.’

I have only obeyed your wishes.”

“Oh!” cried her ladyship, “you quite mistook my meaning. I was only anxious that, as you declared you were not the lover of one of my girls, people, in general, should not consider you as such; you know the world has no sympathy with romantic friendships; it does not understand them.”

“Perhaps,” said Mr. Glentworth, “the world might not approve of a man of my age assuming the character of lover to one of your young and pretty daughters.”

“Your age!” exclaimed Lady Anne; “what does a lover’s age matter? who thinks of a person’s age under such circumstances?”

“The young ladies themselves might,” returned he.

“Young ladies thinking!” cried Lady Anne; “I have no notion of any such nonsense.”

“To come to the point, however,” said Mr. Glentworth, abruptly, “my business this morning is to ask, ‘have I your permission to address one of the Misses Granard?’” Lady Anne was silent a moment from sheer delight; she had taken the right method after all; what a triumph over Lady Penrhyn! And so Mary—for she instantly decided that it was her—would be married at last! Her congratulations soon found words.

“ My permission, indeed ! you have my warmest approbation. I have not a single objection. Mary is a lucky girl.”

“ I am not,” replied the gentleman, “ speaking of Miss Granard.”

Lady Anne felt secretly disappointed ; however, any daughter was better than none. “ Louisa, or Ellen you mean ?”

“ No,” returned Mr. Glentworth.

“ Not Georgiana ?” interrupted Lady Anne—she could not give up the idea of a coronet for the beauty and the favourite.

“ No, no !” exclaimed her listener, who felt that it was too ridiculous having the girls submitted one after another to his choice, “ I allude to Isabella.”

“ Isabella !” ejaculated Lady Anne, in a tone of blank amazement. That her youngest and neglected daughter should be the object of preference had never once occurred to her ; it was almost as good as Mary, if she had been the choice. “ Isabella !” continued she, joyfully — “ oh, yes, certainly ! she will be only too happy. I will go and tell her this moment !”

“ It is unnecessary,” said Mr. Glentworth ; “ I have already obtained Isabella’s consent.”

Lady Anne thought that he had given himself unnecessary trouble ; however, he was too rich not to be indulged in a few peculiarities. The conversation now turned on business matters ; and even Lady Anne was amazed at Mr. Glentworth’s wealth and liberality.

She had no idea that he was so rich, still less that he would be so generous.

“The girl has fetched a good price,” said Lady Penrhyn, with a bitter sneer, in answer to Lady Anne’s triumphant details of rent-rolls and settlements; “those old men always do choose such young girls.”

“Old!” cried Lady Anne; “why, it was but the other day that you said he was too young to be the friend of my daughters!”

“A man is always too young for such sentimental friendships,” replied the other. “Isabella is not yet seventeen. I will give her three years before she runs away!”

All was now gaiety and bustle in Welbeck Street. Mr. Glentworth was anxious to gratify even every caprice of his betrothed; and, if she had them not, he invented them for her. For the first time, Lady Anne felt almost fond of her daughter when she saw her jewel-box. There is certainly a great deal of delusion in marriage, as far as the lady is concerned: it is not only the lover of which she suddenly becomes possessed, but of white satin, white silk, white lace, “rings, bracelets, and carkanets,” such as never crossed even the visions of her girlhood. One would think that her marriage was an individual advantage to all her friends, so much interest do they appear to take in the matter. It might seem that love and marriage were more especially confined in their interest to the happy two, and “two only;” no such thing, it is

diffused through the whole circle of their acquaintance ; and when the happy event has actually taken place, the bride and bridegroom are, as if they had not only never been seen before, but were especially worthy of being seen, so pressing, so numerous are the invitations heaped upon them.

After all, it says something for the kind-heartedness of human nature, this readiness to sympathize ; whether they are or are not, the young couple are supposed to be happy : and it is an amiable feeling that prompts the many to rejoice with them. It is curious to observe that there are some delusions which are for ever renewed ; experience shows, that ninety-nine marriages lead to great wretchedness on either side ; and yet, people go on with congratulations as warm and as sincere as if there were common and constant cause for the said congratulations.

No one was more rejoiced at the prospect of Isabella's marriage than Mrs. Palmer ; she saw all the advantages of the connexion, and she could not help having a secret feeling of self-congratulation that she had had some hand in bringing the matter about. Mr. Glentworth had called expressly to communicate his marriage. " I may," said he, " have done a foolish thing in marrying such a mere girl, but I do it with a firm belief, that it is her happiness I have chiefly consulted."

" Isabella is deeply attached to you," replied Mrs. Palmer ; " and she is not only a pretty, but a very

good girl, and naturally serious and thoughtful. You dwell too much on your age ; a man at seven and thirty is in the prime of life."

"Still," returned he, "twenty years is a great difference ; however, I have done for the best, and such I hope it will turn out."

Mrs. Palmer had no misgivings about the matter ; still, she could not but observe that Isabella was not in her usual spirits ; and, as the day approached, she grew more silent and more abstracted. Lady Anne thought of nothing beyond the new dresses, and the glittering "toys and trifles." Her sisters thought that silence was only part of being in love ; and, though glad of what every one called "Isabella's good fortune," they were too sad, when they thought it involved their separation, to wonder that she should sometimes be sad like themselves. But Mrs. Palmer saw that there was more than the natural and sweet sorrow which a kind and affectionate temper feels at the prospect of parting with the companions of her girlhood ; she had, to use the old lady's phrase, "evidently something on her mind." What that was, Mrs. Palmer learned two days before her marriage, when Isabella came, for the last time, to drink tea with her alone.

"You are wrong," said the agitated girl, who had dwelt on one subject till she could bear its bitterness no longer, and confidence became the greatest relief — "you are quite wrong, in supposing that I am not

attached to Mr. Glentworth.” This idea had entered Mrs. Palmer’s imagination ; she thought that perhaps she had been mistaken in Isabella’s feelings, and that she was, in mistaken disinterestedness, sacrificing herself to the good of her family. “ I love him to a degree that I do not understand. It is wonderful that a stranger should be dearer to me than those whom I have loved and known for years—yet, dearer is he to me ; I would forsake all, and follow him alone.”

“ Very natural, and very proper,” replied Mrs. Palmer ; “ but what, then, is the matter with you ? ”

“ I will tell you,” answered Isabella, in a choked voice—“ I love him ! but he does not love me ! ”

Mrs. Palmer started. “ What does he marry you for, then ? ”

“ Kindness !—pity,” replied she, “ for the orphans of his friend ! ”

“ Gentlemen do not often marry for such praiseworthy reasons,” replied Mrs. Palmer, who would certainly have laughed, if her young friend had looked less serious.

“ If there ever was any body kind and good, it is yourself,” exclaimed Isabella ; “ read this letter,” giving Mr. Glentworth’s, “ and tell me whether I have not cause to be unhappy.”

Mrs. Palmer drew the candle towards her, adjusted her spectacles, and began to read. Isabella thought she never would have finished ; and when the letter was ended, the old lady deliberately began and read it over again. “ A very kind, considerate letter,”

said she, folding it carefully, and returning it to the owner, "but I cannot find out what there is in it to make you unhappy."

"Do you not see," exclaimed Isabella, fancying that one portion of the epistle must have been omitted, "that he owns he has loved another?"

"My dear, little foolish girl," cried Mrs. Palmer, with an expression of the greatest relief, "is that all? I should never have thought that you would have been so silly—what else could you expect? Do you think that a handsome man like Mr. Glentworth, going about the world, too, all his life, should never have been in love till now! it would be ridiculous to suppose such a thing." Isabella gave a deep sigh. "Almost every boy fancies that he is in love—and every girl too, for the matter of that," continued Mrs. Palmer; "but it always ends in nothing—and very lucky for them it does."

"But," said Isabella, "Mr. Glentworth alludes to a serious, devoted attachment."

"But," replied Mrs. Palmer, "one hopeless, and therefore at an end." Poor Isabella did not feel as if an attachment must be at an end because hopeless. She said nothing, however, and Mrs. Palmer went on. "Now there is my husband and myself: he was not only married before, but it was a love-match; but it never came into my head to be jealous of the late Mrs. Palmer." This scarcely appeared a case in point to her youthful listener, who still remained silent, from not knowing very well what to say. "Listen to

me, my dear little Isabella, and come and sit here," pointing to a seat beside the arm-chair, and passing her hand caressingly over the pretty head that now rested on her knee, "never make fanciful miseries for yourself. There is plenty of real sorrow, without your inventing any. Here have you been fretting, and making me more anxious than you suppose, and all for what?—because a man turned thirty has already had an attachment! I dare say he has had half a dozen." Isabella thought that she preferred half a dozen to the one; still, she could not help secretly feeling that the matter was beginning to appear of less paramount importance.

"I will tell you what, my very dear child," continued Mrs. Palmer, kindly and seriously, "there is neither judgment nor delicacy in questioning of these matters; let the past alone. You are about to marry a man worthy of any woman's affection; you will have a guide and a protector in the many difficulties of life; one to whom you may safely look up, and from whom you will meet all kindness and affection. Perhaps he fears that you may expect that exaggerated devotion suited to the romantic boy, but not to the rational and responsible husband. He tells you that your affection will constitute his happiness—let it be your study to make it such; and, a year hence, come and tell me how fond Mr. Glentworth is of his little Isabella."

Only those who have brooded over some sorrow con-

nected with the affections—fanciful, perhaps, at first, but grown into painful reality by the imagination constantly dwelling upon it—can tell the relief which Isabella found in the mingled kindness and plain good sense of Mrs. Palmer. She blamed herself for morbid indulgence in what she now held was a vain and selfish regret, while she had not been sufficiently thankful for the actual blessings of her lot. Moreover, for the buoyant eye of youth always turns to the future, she looked forward to securing the attachment of her husband, by constant care for his happiness, her tender and anxious affection.

The day of the wedding came at last—a day of disappointment to Lady Anne, who found all her plans, of an elegant breakfast, a bishop to perform the ceremony, a special license, and a select party of friends—that is, those of her acquaintance whose names would look best in a paragraph; all this was “blighted in the bloom” by Mr. Glentworth’s rigid determination that the marriage should be strictly private. Mrs. Palmer was the only guest whom he would allow to be invited; “and but for Lord Rotheles passing, by chance, through London, I verily believe,” said Lady Anne, indignantly, “he would have asked Mr. Palmer to give you away.”

While bills are being brought into the House of Commons to regulate every thing, from the sweeps crying “sweep,” to “emancipation, vote by ballot, and free trade,” is there no county member whose

“time and talents” are devoted to “domestic policy,” who will bring in a bill “for the better regulation of the marriage ceremony,” and put the canonical hours later in the day? What justice, or, what is more to the point in the present day, what philanthropy is there in disturbing the natural rest of a whole household, because one of them is to be married? at all events, could there not be a special clause in favour of London? A spring morning there is the very reverse of Thomson’s description; for “delicious mildness” read “a cutting east wind;” and for “veiled in roses” substitute “smoke and fog.” The streets are given up to the necessities of life — to the milkman with his cans, the butcher with his tray, the baker with his basket; all belong to the material portion of existence. Now, marriage is (or ought to be) an affair of affections, sentiments, &c. The legislature ought to give it the full benefit of moonlight and wax-candles.

When they arrived at St. George’s, Lady Anne looked better than her daughters; they had been up half the night, clinging with natural fondness to the sister about to leave her home for ever, and they had risen far earlier than was necessary; and, in their anxiety that she should look her best, had done their utmost, by over fatigue, to make the whole party look as ill as possible. Isabella was too much dressed; her slight figure was quite weighed down with satin and blonde. Mr. Glentworth had fallen into the common

error of supposing that nothing could delight a young person so much as dress; while Lady Anne, enchanted to think that no restraint was laid upon the "milliners' bills," had launched into every possible extravagance, while Isabella thought it would be ungracious to reject aught that came to her as his gift.

Lord Rotheles gave the bride away with the most perfect propriety, assuming the interest that he did slightly feel, and wishing them, with an air equally cordial and sincere, that happiness which he thought they were taking the worst possible method of securing. The earl had been a very handsome man, but dissipation had assisted time, and he was now the wreck of his former self. Little did Mr. Glentworth dream of how much his own destiny had been connected with that of the Earl of Rotheles. His lordship regretted exceedingly that a particular and indispensable engagement on business precluded his accompanying them to Welbeck Street. The fact was, he dreaded a scene, and hated a family party. Mr. Glentworth hurried the leave-taking as much as he could, but not even her own conviction that she was most fortunate, most happy, could prevent a passionate burst of tears as the bride sank back in the elegant travelling-carriage.

"What a pity," exclaimed Lady Anne, as she cast a discontented look on her daughters, "that you should be so beautifully dressed, and no one to see you!" Her attention was, however, attracted to Mary,

who, in the most ill-judged manner, fainted away in her new dress and bonnet. It was found to be a case beyond domestic remedies, and a physician was sent for. The patient was ordered to bed, and the medical man gave no hopes of rapid recovery. The fact was, Miss Granard was in that state of health which was unequal to the slightest exertion; patient and quiet, she never complained, till at last the excitement of her sister's marriage proved too much for her wasted and feeble frame. The physician soon began to hint at the necessity of change of scene, and Lady Anne to think how ill-fated she was to have a sickly daughter. "Why, it is only the other day," cried she, "that you had the scarlet fever."

"London never did agree with Mary," said Louisa, in an apolegetic tone.

"Nonsense! London never disagrees with me," said her ladyship.

"But Mary has quite a different constitution," replied her sister; "she needs air and exercise."

"Air and exercise!" interrupted Lady Anne; "why did I not get you a key to the Portman Square Garden?"

CHAPTER XIII.

“I am too happy!” exclaimed Isabella, as she paced up and down the gravel walk of the inn where they stopped to breakfast on their return to London, having stepped into the garden while waiting for Mr. Glentworth. It was one of those delicious mornings, “when but to breathe is pleasant;” sunshine lay golden on every leaf, and the beds were filled with common flowers, lovelier for their being common—sheltered by a hedge of mingled honeysuckle and wild rose, stood some hives of bees, the sound of whose pliant wings came from the kitchen-garden beyond, now in the first fragrant blossom of the bean. The low, clipped hawthorn hedge shewed, on the other side, a green and winding lane, which divided the fertile meadows, some of which still swept in emerald luxuriance, while others were sweet with the newly-mown grass. A church crowned the hill, whose square tower was clothed with the ivy of a century. Isabella walked on with a keen feeling of enjoyment, and soon began to pick some of the flowers with which the garden was so profusely stocked; it was only within the last few weeks that she had known the pleasure of gathering a nosegay for herself.

Mr. Glentworth had not taken his young bride to any of the more noted scenes ; those he kept for a time when the imagination might need more stimulus ; now he contented himself with a quiet journey through a secluded part, whose beauty consisted only in those green fields and lanes which are peculiar to England. Placed under no necessity to admire, she enjoyed every thing ; and she was never weary of the drive or walk through a country, which, accustomed as she was to a dull, dark street, seemed to her “ an opening paradise.” Mr. Glentworth was delighted with the fresh pure taste, whose enjoyments were so simple and yet so vivid ; and when, let her be doing what she would, he was caught sight of at the first glance, and she sprang to meet him, her hands filled with flowers, and her cheek as bright, he could not but admit the felicity of being so beloved. He now made his appearance at the end of the walk ; she seemed to know it by intuition, for she turned instantly, and, in another moment, her arm was in his, and they had entered the breakfast-room. If the fields of long rich grass—the hedges where a few late sprays of hawthorn were still in bloom — if these were thoroughly English, so was the little inn parlour, with its white curtains, where the roses looked in at the window. The breakfast table, which, at Isabella’s request, had been drawn close to the open casement, seemed the picture of comfort. Most of the articles were home-made ; the bread, the yellow butter, as golden as the cups to

which it has given name; the thickest cream, and a honeycomb redolent of the thyme which even then echoed with the hum of the bees.

“By the bye, Isabella,” said Mr. Glentworth, “I cannot longer let you have a secret from me. What did you do with the hundred pounds, whose use and possession were to be such a mystery?” Isabella coloured deeper than the roses at her side, while confessing. “You are a dear, good little girl,” said her husband; “I suspected something of the sort. Do you still vote for Charles Penrhyn?”

“I am more anxious than ever,” whispered Isabella. “The more happy I am, the more I wish Louisa happy, too.”

“Do you see this letter?” said her husband; “it was to meet me here, and I have just fetched it from the post-office. I find that I can now place Mr. Penrhyn in a situation of complete independence, and with excellent prospects. Shall we write to ask him and Louisa to dine with us the day we arrive in town?”

“How kind you are!” exclaimed Isabella; “do tell me what Charles Penrhyn is to be.”

“A merchant,” replied Mr. Glentworth; “government interest I have none, but my late connection enables me to name him as junior partner in an old established house. He will have a thousand a year to begin with, and with prudence and talent will realize a large fortune.”

“How can Louisa, how can I thank you enough?” said Isabella.

“My letters received this morning bring me another piece of news with which, I fear, you will not be so well pleased. I must be in Marseilles as soon as possible.” Isabella could not but contrast her present feelings on hearing that he was going abroad, to those with which she had once listened to a similar declaration. “I have been thinking,” continued he, “that such a journey would do Mary the greatest benefit. Could you persuade her to accompany us? I must be much taken up with business, and you might feel lonely.”

“I am sure that Mary will be glad, almost as glad as myself,” replied Isabella. Mr. Glentworth had his letters to write before he began the day’s journey, and Isabella again loitered a half hour in the garden. What a change had a few weeks made in her prospects, and in those of her family! she was married to a man who anticipated her very wishes. The obstacles to Louisa’s attachment were on the point of being removed, and Mary was about to have that change which her physician declared was her only chance of restored health. Again Isabella exclaimed, “I am too happy.”

Louisa was to dine with Mrs. Glentworth at their hotel in Albemarle Street; her lover was to come in the evening, as all parties agreed that he ought at once to communicate his altered situation to Lord and Lady Penrhyn. Charles had accepted Mr. Glentworth’s offered kindness frankly and gratefully.

“Our happiness, and my doing credit to your recommendation, will,” said he to his new friend, “be your best reward.”

He found both sister and brother in high good humour. A Hungarian baron, with an unpronounceable name, had that very morning been so struck with Lady Penrhyn’s beauty, that, not knowing she was married, he laid himself, castle, sabre, and fur pelisses at her feet, for immediate acceptance.

She told this as a good story, not considering how much it revealed of the lightness and encouragement which must have marked her conduct, before it could have happened to a married woman, and not aware of what to other tellers constituted the point of the anecdote, that the Hungarian had understood that she was not the wife, but the heiress of Lord Penrhyn. He was equally pleased after his kind; a new and rich vein of lead had been discovered in some mines which he had bought for next to nothing from an old friend who had ruined himself in the speculation. Gratified vanity and interest give their own interest to fish, flesh, and fowl: the cloth removed, and the servants withdrawn, Penrhyn thought that he could not have a better opportunity. A man is always ashamed of confessing that he is about to be married — even to an heiress — but when it comes to an attachment, and to a girl without a shilling, the avowal is very embarrassing indeed. Charles planned

divers ways of introducing the subject during the three courses, and of course did exactly the reverse of what he intended. Instead of ingeniously bringing the conversation round to the point he wished, he made a desperate rush, and exclaimed abruptly, "Do you know I am going to be married?"

"What heiress have you brought down?" cried his sister.

"You are never going to be such a fool," said Lord Penrhyn.

"I should despise myself," replied Charles, with *un petit air de sentiment*, "were I capable of marrying for money."

"All for love, and the world well lost," interrupted Lady Penrhyn.

"I certainly," returned her brother, "consider love indispensable in marriage."

"Money is much more so," exclaimed Lord Penrhyn; "you cannot marry on three hundred a year."

"Oh," cried her ladyship, "I see the whole *ménage*; they will take a first floor over a baker's shop, to save fire, and live upon red herrings during the week, with a mutton chop by way of meat on a Sunday."

"I think," replied Charles, "we might do better than that even on three hundred a year. But I frankly confess, that, with my habits and ideas, though I could put aside luxuries, I could not en-

ture to marry without my wife had some prospect of the comfort and refinement of that rank in life to which we have both been accustomed."

"I must tell you," exclaimed Lord Penrhyn, "that you need not look to any thing from me. I would not, if I could, help a young man who thinks of marrying."

"And, pray, who is the young lady?" asked his sister.

"Louisa Granard," replied her brother, who could scarcely have named any one more displeasing.

"That insipid pink and white thing!" cried Lady Penrhyn.

"Why, she has not a guinea, nor an expectation," cried her husband.

"With all sorts of extravagant notions, inherited from her mother," said that mother's particular friend.

"Lady Anne ruined her husband," said Lord Penrhyn.

"Will you have a hackney coach for your travelling carriage?" cried her ladyship.

"Spare your wit, Julia," replied Mr. Penrhyn; "my mind is quite made up. Louisa and myself have been long attached, and, if our home be an humble, I hope, I know that it will be a happy one. I trust in the course of a month to introduce Mrs. Charles Penrhyn."

"Not to me," interrupted his sister. "I will have

no straw-bonneted, gingham-gowned pattern wives in my acquaintance. I shall make a point of cutting you."

"I am glad that you, my dear Julia," said Lord Penrhyn, "show your usual good sense in not encouraging such folly. Again, I ask, how are you and Miss Louisa Granard to live upon three hundred a year?"

"We do not," returned Charles, "intend to try; "it would, indeed, have been folly to marry upon so limited an income, but we have always looked forward to your lordship's interest placing me in a more independent position."

"I can and will do nothing for you," was the short stern answer.

"I do not now ask you," said the other. "Mr. Glentworth's kindness has opened to me other prospects. I shall resign my present situation."

"Very ungrateful of you," interrupted his sister, "after all the interest it required to obtain it."

"I do not think that is much ingratitude," replied he, "in giving it up, when, by so doing, I more than treble my income."

"I did not know that Glentworth had such interest. What place has he procured for you?" asked Lord Penrhyn.

"I am to be the junior partner in the house of Franklin and Osborne, with which he has long been connected," answered Mr. Penrhyn.

“A tradesman!” shrieked his sister; “have you no sense of what is due to your family—no pride?”

“Yes,” said Charles, “I have the pride of independence.”

“I consider myself very ill used,” said Lord Penrhyn, “that you who owe me—I may say every thing—have not thought proper to consult me in this business.”

“I came here,” returned his young relative, “the moment I heard of it. I never supposed you could object to such an opening for my future exertions.”

Lord Penrhyn hesitated, while his wife exclaimed, “If you had one atom of the spirit of a gentleman, you would not think of so disgracing your family.”

“I really cannot see how I disgrace my family,” replied her brother, “by an endeavour at honourable exertion.”

“Well,” cried she, “I only beg you will not give yourself the trouble of coming here again, and, as for your wife, I can tell you that I will never visit her.”

“You have quite cured me,” said Lord Penrhyn, now assured that he would have no conjugal opposition to encounter, “of ever doing any thing for a young man again. I give you up; if you like to throw away your own prospects, you may, but, as this will be the last time we shall meet under a roof, which, as your sister truly says, you are about to disgrace, I take the opportunity of saying that I consider your conduct the height of ingratitude.”

“This is too unreasonable,” cried Charles, rising: “where is the disgrace of an intelligent and honourable calling, and where the ingratitude of endeavouring to improve my condition, without trespassing further on your kindness?”

“Good evening, sir,” said Lord Penrhyn, who had too much sense not to know that the subject would not bear arguing. Charles’s heart swelled within him; he went round, and would have taken his sister’s hand to bid her farewell, but she snatched it away, and said, “Remember, I shall never visit your wife.” Charles left the house at once indignant and astonished; and yet he had lived long enough in the world to know that nothing is too unreasonable nor too unkind for selfishness, acted upon by vanity; moreover, that we always harden ourselves in the ill doing of which we are secretly ashamed.

CHAPTER XIV.

Mrs. Glentworth and her sister Mary set off the next morning for Marseilles—too hurried almost for the natural right of parting—and the next three days Louisa passed in a fever of worry, to know why Charles Penrhyn had not written to ask Lady Anne's consent, as it was settled that he should do. Luckily, Mrs. Palmer, who thought the young people would be dull now their sisters were gone, asked the three remaining ones to accompany her to the theatre, and Mr. Charles Penrhyn having called in the morning, she mentioned their plan to him, and, on his expressing a wish to join their party, gave a very kind invitation to their box. The young lover was in waiting, to hand them out of the large substantial carriage, and the first quiet moment that he could find for an apart whisper, said, "What can be the reason that your mother has never taken the slightest notice of my letter?"

"Your letter!" exclaimed Louisa, "then you have written to her?"

"Of course," replied Mr. Penrhyn; "can you suppose that I would lose one moment in writing?"

“She has never,” said Louisa, “even hinted at it to me; and to-night she is gone with Lady Penrhyn to the opera.”

“I shall write again to-morrow, may I not?” asked Charles.

Louisa blushed, and that was answer enough. The following morning a letter was brought to Lady Anne, while she and Louisa were seated alone in the drawing-room. Miss Granard bent sedulously over her work-box, yet, with nervous quickness, her ear caught the breaking of the seal, the rustle of the unfolding, and then followed a deep silence while its contents were being read. Her heart throbbed so audibly, that she feared her mother must hear its beating. At length Lady Anne spoke. “This is the most amusing piece of impertinence. Fancy, my dear Louisa, Lady Penrhyn’s brother, who she was telling me has behaved most ungratefully to Lord Penrhyn — is the writer of this letter — and what do you think are its contents?”

There was something so discouraging in this exordium, that Louisa could not force herself into a reply.

“You will,” continued her mother, “look still more surprised, when you hear that this young merchant, for such, it seems, he is, has the presumption to make you an offer, and this is the second letter I have received from him.”

“He wrote before,” exclaimed Louisa.

“Yes,” said Lady Anne, “and I twisted his letter into *alumettes*. I really did not think it worth while noticing such folly ; but, to save myself the trouble of opening any more letters, this may as well be answered.”

“My dear mamma,” Louisa began, but in a voice so low, that Lady Anne did not notice it, while her ladyship continued, “you may as well save me the trouble, just take a sheet of paper, and say, ‘Lady Anne Granard’s compliments to Mr. Charles, and begs to decline the proposals, which she cannot but express her surprise he should have thought worthy of Miss Granard’s attention.’”

The extremity of the case gave Louisa courage :—

“I cannot,” said she, gravely, “write such an answer, for Mr. Penrhyn had my permission to apply to you.”

“Are you mad?” cried Lady Anne ; “did you dream that I ever would consent to such a disgraceful connexion?”

“I cannot see in what it is disgraceful,” replied Louisa, recovering her presence of mind. “Mr. Penrhyn is a young man of good character.”

“But of no fortune,” interrupted her mother.

“Yet in the fair way of making one,” replied Miss Granard, “and with sufficient to begin upon.”

“A merchant with some nine hundred a year, disowned by his connexions.”

“To their own disgrace,” replied Louisa.

“Say no more,” exclaimed Lady Anne; “you shall never have my consent.”

“Do not,” cried her daughter, “force me into marrying without it.”

“I will not have Charles Penrhyn’s name,” exclaimed Lady Anne, “ever mentioned in this house again. What can a girl want to be married for, unless the marriage be a good one?”

“Such do I consider mine,” said Louisa. “I love Charles—I have long loved him. In birth, education, and position, there is perfect equality between us, while Mr. Glentworth’s kindness has placed him in a situation which enables us to marry with that prudence, which neither would neglect for the sake of the other.”

“What business,” cried Lady Anne, peevishly, “had Mr. Glentworth to interfere in the matter?”

“Do not blame him,” exclaimed her daughter; “he knew then he was making me happy.”

“What nonsense,” said her ladyship, growing more and more angry, “it is to talk about being happy!”

“I trust,” replied Louisa, “you will allow Mr. Penrhyn to try and persuade you.”

“He shall never enter my house,” returned her mother, “to mar your prospects in this manner. Lady Penrhyn was telling me last night that you had a very fair chance of Lord Casilda.”

“A man old enough to be my grandfather,” cried Louisa; “I must tell you once for all, I will marry

no one but Charles Penrhyn; we will wait any time that you may think proper, if ——.”

“You may wait for ever,” interrupted Lady Anne. “I will shut you up on bread and water, rather than that you should marry him. I am sure never had any body such wicked and undutiful children.”

This was too much. Louisa burst into tears, and left the room. For the next week her life was wretched; Lady Anne was sufficiently impressed with the propriety of marrying only for money or title, to have been angry enough by herself; but she was stimulated by Lady Penrhyn, who could not forgive her brother—that he should be in the right, while she was in the wrong—a very common, yet a very great grievance in this world.

“Louisa will be worried to death, unless you stand her friend,” said Mr. Penrhyn to Mrs. Palmer, with whom he had been talking over Lady Anne’s vexatious and continued opposition; “she is looking almost as pale and ill as poor Mary.”

Those who have all their lives been accustomed to a cheerful and happy home, can scarcely understand the extent to which domestic tyranny is sometimes carried. But for her sister’s affection, Louisa’s life would have been unbearable. To hear Lady Anne’s expressions, a stranger would have supposed that her daughter had committed some disgraceful act, whose very mention ought to be reprobated. To these reproaches Lady Penrhyn added her sneers, and Lord

Casilda his attentions, till Louisa began to think that run away she must in her own defence.

Mrs. Palmer had, however, arranged differently. "I am sure," said she, "Palm and myself are the last persons in the world to encourage children in being undutiful to their parents; but there's reason in every thing. If children are to be dutiful, parents ought to respect that duty. If Lady Anne had one reasonable objection to the marriage, I would not say a word. If it were imprudent, and in the thoughtlessness of youth you were about to plunge each other in difficulties that neither were fit to encounter; if she objected to your character, or thought that your temper would not make her daughter comfortable, I should say she was right in her opposition. But she takes no care for the happiness of her child, who has always been loving and dutiful, and she would rather have her a countess, neglected, ill-matched, the purchase of a selfish and bad-tempered man, than your happy and affectionate wife."

"She will be happy, if I can make her so," said the lover, earnestly.

"Now Palm and I," continued the kind-hearted old lady, "have been thinking, that, though, perhaps, Louisa might not like to marry from this very house, just opposite to her mother's, who must see her get into the carriage to go to church, it would seem like setting her at defiance; still why might not she be married from my daughter's, Mrs. Gooch?"

“A most capital plan,” exclaimed Charles.

“Lady Anne will not be annoyed,” added Mrs. Palmer, “by seeing any of the preparations. Louisa can be as quiet as she pleases during the fortnight necessary for the license, and, let me tell you, Mrs. Gooch is an excellent person for her to stay with before her marriage, Charlotte is such a capital manager.”

“We can never thank you enough,” replied Charles; “but when can she go?”

“I have settled it all, if you consent,” answered Mrs. Palmer; “my daughter will be delighted to receive her. Helen is to call this afternoon for my message, and to-morrow, before Lady Anne is up, I will drive Louisa to Mrs. Gooch’s.”

What could Mr. Penrhyn say, but what he did — that he was divided between love and gratitude.

In the mean time, Lady Anne had taken what she called a decisive step in the business; she had written to Lord Rotheles, begging that he would remonstrate with Louisa on her disgraceful marriage. By return of post she received the following answer from Lady Rotheles:

“Dear Lady Anne—Rotheles and I are such an old-fashioned couple, that we open each other’s letters. From his being very unwell, I opened your’s, which, after reading it to him, he requested I would answer. He begs me to say that we both consider it very ill-judged on your part to object to any tolerably

respectable offer for one of your numerous family. Your eldest daughter is still unmarried, and, from all I hear, likely to remain so ; your youngest and prettiest has only been able to attract a man old enough to be her father. This is bad for her other sisters, as it gives the unpopular idea of match-making. Lord Rotheles unites with me in advising you to give your immediate consent to Mr. Penrhyn's proposal. As, however, Louisa is to marry so much beneath our family, to a young man in trade, Lord Rotheles cannot offer his services as father on the occasion. We, however, unite in kind regards to the young couple ; and we shall take the first opportunity of sending them a wedding present. We are a little puzzled what it can be. Ornaments would be too much out of character ; perhaps money would be best—it is always useful. We shall, therefore, send a twenty pound note as a wedding present. We hope you will warn our niece against becoming intimate with that notorious flirt, Lady Penrhyn. As we trust that before this reaches you, the expediency of the marriage will have struck you as forcibly as it does us, we will conclude with congratulations.

“Very much your's,

“H. ROTHELES.”

Louisa was received with the greatest cordiality by her hostess, who seemed quite astonishd that Miss Granard should think that there was any awkwardness or delicacy in the matter.

“Good gracious, my dear!” said the lady, “I should have ran off at once, if pa had said any thing against my having Tom. I shouldn’t have asked him twice. He did talk about our waiting a year; but, as Tom said, ‘what was the use of waiting, when he had just had new carpets and curtains?’ Mrs. Gooch, too, was surprised that Louisa made a point of being as quiet as possible; she declining going to three such pleasant dances, would not go to the play, and even objected to dinner-parties.” “Good gracious, my dear!” again exclaimed Mrs. Gooch; “Tom and I were so gay before our marriage. We went here, there, and every where; I think young people ought to see a little pleasure before being married, for they don’t see much afterwards. Not that I need say so, for we have a great many dinner and evening friends, and we go to Richmond twice every summer.”

Mrs. Gooch was that uncommon individual, a contented person—she liked her house, her husband, and her two children. Their footman was not very tall, but he had a very showy livery of green and red; carriage they had not as yet, but they went to their best dinners in a glass-coach; and, as Mr. Gooch observed, “there was no saying what he might do in a year or two.”

Their parlour was an exceedingly comfortable room; there was a sofa often wheeled round to the fire when Mrs. Gooch desired to flatter her husband, that is, if imitation be the most delicate flattery, by fol-

lowing his example, and going to sleep after dinner. Mr. Gooch had a large easy chair opposite. There was a bookcase on one side, and a work-table on the other, and when the servant brought the tea things, they mutually roused up, and a cup of good tea, both were particular on that point, completely awakened them.

Mrs. Gooch then took her work, and Mr. Gooch a book, which served to draw on a little confidential conversation ; the one had the news of the neighbourhood, and the other the news of the city, to communicate. A little before eleven, they had some hot negus, and then went to bed ; for Mrs. Gooch always got up to make her husband's breakfast, and he was obliged to be in the city by nine.

Miss Granard's visit was too important not to derange the usual economy of the house—the niece of the Earl of Rotheles was a very different person from the ordinary run of young friends who came to stay a week or so. Mr. Gooch was so far moved from the even tenour, to buy—first a pocket-book, containing a small view of Rotheles Castle, at the top of a neatly-ruled page for memoranda ; and, secondly, a number of a work, illustrating the principal gentlemen's seats in England, and containing a large view of the said castle. It was decided that they should sit in the drawing-room, in Miss Granard's especial honour, though Mrs. Gooch's peace of mind was a little disturbed that there was not time to take the covers off

the furniture. Now there is nothing that puts people out of their way more than a change from their usual sitting-room ; it is almost as bad as moving to a new house. Moreover, Mrs. Gooch's drawing-room had the cold and comfortless air inevitable on not being in common use. Every thing was so terribly neat, that you dreaded moving even a chair from what was obviously its proper and appointed place.

There was the handsome carpet, new on the occasion of Mr. Gooch's marriage, but it was carefully covered with a drab drugget ; the curtains were of a pretty pink damask, but they were enveloped in brown holland bags, by which same material the chairs and sofas were covered. The chandeliers were shrouded in yellow gauze, so were the looking-glasses, while the dull brown and sickly yellow produced the most chill and unbecoming effect imaginable. The toys ranged, not scattered, about were chiefly the result of Mrs. Gooch's yearly excursions. There were " memorials of Margate," " a trifle from Brighton," a man and woman made of shells, divers pincushions ingeniously inserted in the same marine abodes, and an alum-basket, which looked as if it would crumble at a touch.

Mrs. Gooch felt as she were out on some formal visit : she was debarred from that ordinary amusement, looking through the blinds without being seen ; she did not like to produce her ordinary work in the very face of the very handsome ivory box, which was for show, not use ; and she was a little puzzled what

sort of conversation was fit for the best room and Lady Anne Granard's daughter. She began to talk of the opera, and it was the first step towards an acquaintance, when Louisa very naturally diverged to the theatre. But, between really kind and unaffected people, this sort of reserve cannot last, and Louisa was soon seated in the parlour window, and Mrs. Gooch helping her to make a set of collars; shopping, too—shopping! one of the pleasant necessities in a young lady's case who is about to change her condition, filled up the morning; and, a little before six, Charles Penrhyn's rap was as duly expected as Mr. Gooch's. The host and guest got on exceedingly well together, while Charles obtained much valuable information from Mr. Gooch's good sense and experience.

Louisa, who was conscious of her own awkward position, was sometimes a little vexed that, whenever morning visitors called, Charlotte would ask some question about her aunt the countess, and her uncle the earl, and make an arch allusion to the approach of a certain happy event; still, these were temporary annoyances, and she found the fortnight glide away in quiet and comfort, the more enjoyed from her recent persecution. Twice she wrote to her mother, who took not the least notice of her pleading and affectionate letters.

The only communication was a packet, forwarded to Miss Granard from her uncle. It may be doubted whe-

ther Lady Anne would have forwarded it so readily, had she known its contents ; but, taking it for granted, from the letter of Lady Rotheles, that they would be of a mortifying nature, she lost no time in sending it to its destination. But Lord Rotheles was in complete ignorance of the tenour of his wife's epistle, who simply told him that she had written to Lady Anne, to remonstrate on the folly of her opposing a respectable connexion. The earl was too indolent and too poorly to do any one an active service, but he really liked his pretty nieces ; and, knowing that his wife encouraged no generosity that had not herself for its object, wrote the following note, without consulting her upon the subject :

“ My dear niece,

“ I regret much to hear that Lady Anne is opposed to your marriage ; but your forming great matches has ever been her weak point. I see no reason why you should all become old maids while waiting for dukes. I congratulate Mr. Penrhyn, and would have given you away myself, but am too weak to travel so soon after my illness. Pray accept the accompanying trifles, with the best wishes of your affectionate uncle,

“ ROTHELES.”

The purple morocco cases accompanying the latter contained a handsome set of gold ornaments. Louisa was deeply gratified, even more on Charles's account than on her own ; it was such injustice on the part of her family to treat him with such insolence as Lady Anne and Lady Rotheles displayed. It was with the

keenest pleasure she showed her uncle's kind letter and present — it was gratifying to them both, that her marriage should receive the sanction of the head of her family.

The morning of the wedding came at last ; and when the first gleam of sunshine broke through the curtains, it roused Louisa from a sleepless pillow. Bitterly did she feel the absence of her family from the approaching ceremony. She remembered with what deep affection they had clung together the morning of Isabella's marriage, and how each sought, at first in vain, to cheer the other after her departure. She remembered, too, how often the young bride's eyes had sought theirs, as if to gather courage from their sympathy ! She dreaded the sad yet sweet tears they had shed at parting—none such would be shed to-day ! It seemed as if she could think of nothing else : never had their affection been disturbed by any of the selfish or trivial disputes which so often disturb the serenity of a household ; they had always been ready to yield the one to the other ; and it would indeed have taxed their memory to recall one unkind word.

When Mrs. Gooch came in, who was all alive with the gay flutter she held indispensable to a wedding, she found Louisa weeping bitterly, to her utmost astonishment. “ I never,” exclaimed she, “ could understand why people cry when they are married — I never cried at mine—what was there to cry for ? If Tom had suddenly altered his mind, I might have cried,

though I think, even then, I should have been in too great a rage. But I am sure you are not afraid of Mr. Penrhyn's altering his, for never was any one so much in love." By dint, however, of scolding and coaxing, she forced Louisa to commence the business of the toilette. About an hour after, Mrs. Gooch absolutely ran into her room. "Who do you think," exclaimed she, "are down stairs?" But before she could tell, or the other ask, Louisa found herself clasped in her sister's arms, while Mrs. Gooch, with good-natured consideration, left them to themselves.

"Has mamma forgiven me, that you are here?" asked Louisa, as soon as she could find words.

"She knows nothing about it," said Georgiana; "we shall be back before she is up. Fanchette is gone out for two days, and nobody else will tell her a word."

"We are not wrong. Why, dearest Louisa, should you be banished from your own home, and left to the kindness of strangers? But I will say nothing about it. I feel just as if I were doing right. I could not bear that any one else should put up your beautiful hair to-day, my own dear sister," exclaimed Helen, fondly passing her hand through the long golden tresses, almost as bright as the sunshine which they caught.

"But, however did you find your way here?" said Louisa.

"Mamma would die if she knew. The boy," replied Georgiana, "walked with us to Oxford Street, and we took a hackney-coach. Will Mrs. Gooch ever forgive us for getting out of it at her door?"

“ We have put on the pale blue silks that we wore at Isabella’s wedding ; that, however, was Georgiana’s thought,” continued Helen ; “ she said it would be impossible to go to church in our pink gingham.”

Louisa could not but feel how much she must be beloved by her sisters, before they would have undertaken what, to girls of their secluded and obedient habits, was indeed an enterprise ; she only hoped that it was not very wrong to be as glad as she was of their presence and their affection. The business of the toilette now proceeded rapidly, only interrupted by Mrs. Gooch once looking in to see how they were proceeding, and, it must be confessed, also, to show herself. Her dress was entirely new for the occasion ; and it was of “ excelling splendour.” She had a jonquil silk pelisse, a bonnet of the same colour, with a bird of paradise plume, looking very much like an illuminated butterfly. But Mr. Gooch liked bright colours ; and, without going the length of kindling yellow, most gentlemen like them too. I think it is the mere preference of personal vanity, on the principle of contrast, their taste is dictated by self-consideration ; a woman in sombre hues does not sufficiently throw out their own dark dress.

When Louisa and her sisters descended to the drawing-room, where Mr. and Mrs. Palmer were the only guests, a murmur of applause ran round the little circle. Louisa looked very lovely in her white muslin dress and drawn white silk capote, only lighted up by the golden and glossy ringlets. The pleasant surprise

yet lingered in the smile around her mouth, and never did blush deepen with softer carnation. There was something so timid, yet so imploring, in her look of deep and conscious happiness, it was as if she entreated Fate to forgive it.

“I cannot blame you,” said Mrs. Palmer, in answer to Helen’s deprecating whisper of explanation; “Louisa well deserves your affection, but pray tell your mother as soon as possible.”

“Oh, we dare not!” cried Georgiana.

“I will tell her,” said Helen, in a low voice; “kind friends as you all are, Louisa would have felt so lonely without her sisters!”

The ceremony was soon over; but, to Charlotte’s great distress, the two girls did not stay: and Mrs. Palmer’s carriage took them back to the end of their own street. It was well that their parting was hurried for Louisa’s sake, whose eyes filled with tears when she thought it might be long before they met again. Despite Mr. and Mrs. Gooch’s good spirits, who saw nothing to be unhappy about, the breakfast was silent, and somewhat sad — a wedding breakfast always is; nay, the very happiest are most likely to wear a serious seeming; as Victor Hugo beautifully says: —

“ — —le bonheur est chose grâve,
Elle veut de cœurs de bronze, et lentement se grave,
Le plaisir l’effarouche en lui jêtant des fleurs
Et son sourire est moins pres des rires que des pleurs.”

And, moreover, the horizon of matrimony is only seen through a glass, and that darkly, if the experience of others be the glass by which we make our observations. How often "the happiest day of one's life" is the herald of many miserable ones! How many marry in all the trust of confident affection, in all the gladness of life's sweetest hope, and yet find themselves miserably disappointed; — affection becomes gradually chilled in the differences of every day; hope discovers its mistake, and

"Such hopes like fairies, when they part,
Leave withered rings around the heart."

And no ring, if it does wither its circle, withers so utterly as a golden one. With only the false criterion of courtship to judge by, the wedded pair expect too much from each other; and those who should make the most, make the least allowance. Tastes differ, tempers jar, trifles become important—as the grain of sand, which, nothing in itself, yet, gathered together, sweeps over the fertile plain, leaving no sign that there ever was blossom or fruit. The scar, which would soon pass, did distance or time intervene, cannot heal from hourly irritation. One quarrel brings the memory of its predecessor, and grievances and mortifications are treasured up for perpetual reference. Too late, each finds out how utterly unsuited either is to the other; they have not a feeling, a taste, or an opinion in common.

“Whither flies love, ah ! where the purple bloom ?” gone never to return ; an illusion destroyed is destroyed for ever ; and what is love but an illusion ? poor basis for the happiness of many years : the heart that trusts to its shelter, builds its house upon the sands. Still, there is no rule without an exception, and Mr. Gooch might be right when he drank a glass of pink champagne “to the health and happiness of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Penrhyn.” The next day Lady Anne received the Morning Post, with Lady Penrhyn’s kind compliments, and a pencil mark at the following announcement.

“Yesterday, at St. Giles’s, Bloomsbury, Charles Penrhyn, only son of the late Charles Penrhyn, of Penrhynhurst, to Louisa, second daughter of the late Edward Granard, Esq.” The paper fell from Lady Anne’s hand. “To think,” cried she, in the low, deep tone of horror, amounting to awe, “that a daughter of mine has been married at St. Giles’s, Bloomsbury.”

CHAPTER XV.

The look of consternation assumed by Lady Anne, on this trying occasion, instantly communicated to her alarmed daughters a sense of the necessity for guarding their secret, which ought never to have entered their minds. They could not bring themselves to believe that the church in which their beautiful sister had "plighted her troth," was materially different from that which had received the vows of Isabella, and were quite certain that her marriage exhibited no "maimed rites," and that her bridegroom was much more animated, and apparently more happy than the dear, good gentleman, whom alone they had beheld in a similar situation. The only difference in the affair which struck them was the great age of the officiating minister, as distinct from the elegant young gentleman who officiated in their younger sister's case, and they alike gave him greatly the preference. In the simplicity of their hearts, they believed that his prayers would have more efficacy from the many years in which they had been offered, and had therefore already concluded (with the premature conviction of youth) that although Isabella had been far the better married, Louisa would be the happier wife.

But that mamma did not think so, nor even wish it should be so, was evident from the indignation not less than the sorrow of her countenance on reading the announcement of the marriage sent so considerately by her *dear friend*, Lady Penrhyn, for the amiable purpose of making her very miserable. That the obliging missive answered its purpose we have seen, but, as the two ladies had too many points in common not to understand one another, no long time elapsed before the dowager drew some consolation from the belief, that at the very time when a source of chagrin was thus offered to her, the kind hand which bestowed the blow belonged to one who was overwhelmed with vexation herself. "If she ever loved any human being (but of that I have my doubts), "it was certainly her brother; and, since she caught that fool, her husband, it may probably have entered her head that Charles might be as lucky as herself; in that case, she is mortified very sufficiently, I must own; nevertheless, she has no right to think lightly of the honour he has attained, which is more, a great deal, than she had a right to expect; but she is, in fact, an *odious* creature."

Lady Anne was happily interrupted by the arrival of the post with a letter, franked by her brother the Earl of Rotheles; he was so ailing and so indolent, that she was not surprised to find it merely an envelope to a slip of newspaper, such a circumstance having not unfrequently occurred to her before. She could not have any doubt that it was merely a repetition of

that she had already felt to be an insult, and that it was forwarded by her sister-in-law, with a good deal of the same kindly intention which actuated her friend; it was, however, in a larger print than the one on the table, and might be less annoying; she, therefore, told Georgiana to read it to her.

The poor girl took it up with a deprecating air, saying, "Which side must I read, mamma?"

"The side, miss, which exhibits your sister's disgraceful position in the low marriage which she has made, for I have no doubt that is the galling subject of the paper. Your eye is quick enough; read that, and let it operate on both you and Helen as a warning."

"Married, at St. Giles's, by the Lord Bishop of Chichester, Rector, Charles Penrhyn, only son of the late Charles Penrhyn, Esq., of Penrhynhurst, to Louisa, second daughter of the late Edward Granard, Esq., of Granard Park, and Lady Anne, daughter of the late and sister of the present Earl of Rotheles. The beautiful bride was given at the altar by James Palmer, Esq., as the representative of the earl, her uncle, and accompanied by her lovely sisters, Mr. and Mrs. Gooch, and other friends."

Before there was time for comment, Georgiana, glancing her eye to the lower part of the slip of paper, read on.

"The great age of the venerable Bishop of Chichester renders it utterly improbable that he should ever again officiate at the altar, for we are assured that,

immediately after performing the ceremony of that marriage in high life mentioned above, his lordship set out for the palace at Chichester ; but it was much doubted, by his lordship's friends and attendants, whether he would arrive there in life."

" I hope he will not," exclaimed Lady Anne, " for it is a relief to know she was married by a proper person, and undoubtedly old Chichester was a gentleman, and it will be always thought he killed himself by making an exertion due to my family — not but the whole affair may be a story got up to please my brother. One part of it is a lie, we are certain—she had no lovely sisters, nor unlovely ones either, for both Mary and Isabella are broiling on the Mediterranean sea."

Georgiana looked at Helen, who sprang forward and took her hand, when both dropped on their knees before their mother, and, with eyes full of tears, looked timidly towards her—both found great difficulty in speaking, yet they were equally sensible that they ought to do so, and that now was their time, for the Bishop had certainly half-exorcised the evil spirit which had so lately possessed her ladyship. Georgiana therefore began.

" We were so fond of Louisa, mamma."

" She loved *us* so very dearly," sighed Helen.

" And to have no mamma, no sister, no natural friend."

" At such an awful time !" echoed Helen.

“What can you mean to say? What do you kneel and cry for, in that unnatural way, like a pair of tragedy queens?”

“Because, mamma, we—”

“We *were* there — pray, *pray* forgive us — we went to the wedding.”

“Went to the wedding in your pink gingham?” screamed Lady Anne.

“Oh! no, dear mamma, we dressed in the same things exactly which were given us for Isabella’s bridal — surely we did right to appear as your daughters and Mrs. Glentworth’s sisters ought to do?” sobbed Georgiana.

“You did very wrong in the whole affair; but, pray, rise, I hate a scene — my nerves are overwrought with these detestable newspapers — not but the last is very tolerably made up—the Palmers of Nayburgh Hall, in Yorkshire, are an ancient and highly respectable family; so are the Gooches, in Suffolk and Gloucester—so far it is fortunate that no vulgar names appear, save that of the church, and within half a century there were two ducal seats in that parish.”

“Yes, mamma, and Milton and Marvel were both buried there,” cried Helen, in a consolatory voice.

“At least the latter was,” observed Georgiana.

“The place could not be made endurable by fifty such people, much less two — both poets and both radicals—no, no, the stain is indelible; but, where

people have no mark, they soon become forgotten. Louisa has consigned herself to oblivion, so I shall not vex myself with thinking of *her*. I shall tell Mrs. Palmer my opinion freely as to *her* conduct."

"She did every thing for your sake, mamma; she said, 'Lady Anne must not be vexed nor mortified;' she contrived every thing so that you might escape all trouble and see nothing to wound you."

In point of fact, perhaps, Lady Anne, during her whole wedded life, had never experienced so much of the ordinary feelings of a mother as rose in her heart (if she had such a thing) when her two fair girls, with tearful eyes and beseeching countenances, looked to her for pardon and love. She had preferred Louisa, as considering her the most beautiful and the most likely to make a splendid marriage-connection; and was, of course, exceedingly disappointed that she should have done what she considered exactly the reverse; and she also felt very angry at the disobedience she had evinced, and the bad example she had given her younger sisters; but their conduct convinced her that, in this respect, she had little to fear. They had done wrong, but the Palmers were more to blame than the girls; and they were, after all, too convenient to be quarrelled with. It was, certainly, better that Louisa should have found a home with people of character, though such people, than have been taken by Charles Penrhyn to a lodging-house. Her daughter had, at least, shown a sense of pro-

priety which would establish her mother's character as a woman who had inculcated the strictest decorum.

Nor could that mother be quite devoid of a laudable curiosity as to the appearance and conduct of her once favourite daughter, on the most important day of her existence, for it savoured of affection at least; therefore we give the *ci-devant* beauty praise for inquiring "what Louisa wore, and how she looked?"

On hearing of the muslin dress, she sneeringly observed "it was contemptible, but certainly consistent with the state of life to which she had condemned herself," adding, "you must see, in this very circumstance, my dears" (the sweet words enhanced the worth of the advice, for my dears in Lady Anne's case were words "few and far between"), "the vast difference between marrying *well* and *ill*. Isabella, whom I always considered my plainest child (as she was by no means so fair as the rest; and was, moreover, too young for finished *tournure* or even manner), in white satin and blonde, with her bandeau of diamonds, and that splendid Brussels' veil, so sweetly supported by the orange wreath, would actually look better than Louisa could possibly do, in a muslin dress and a crape bonnet, even with her unrivalled hair and exquisite eyes!"

Georgiana and Helen were both silent.

"Surely you saw (since you were so imprudent as to go thither) the great difference between your two sisters' situation as brides?"

"Oh! yes," cried Helen; "though I was all of a

flutter, knowing that I had done wrong, and yet feeling someway as if I had done right, I did feel clearly there was a difference, mamma.”

“ Well, child, and in what did it consist ?”

“ Charles Penrhyn looked a great deal happier than Mr. Glentworth, and Louisa not quite so happy as Isabella — how should she, dear mamma, when you had not given your consent? otherwise she would have been perfectly beautiful, for dear uncle’s kind letter and pretty present of most becoming gold ornaments had done her a great deal of good, undoubtedly.”

“ Did you read the Earl’s letter ?”

“ I was so hurried I could scarcely read it, but I know he said he was sorry he could not give his pretty niece away to a worthy man, and he thought it would have been a sad thing if she had been an old maid, whilst her mamma was waiting to find her a duke.”

“ Umph ! — umph ! — was it written in the Earl’s hand ?”

“ Oh ! yes, mamma — and the box of ornaments, though plain gold, were so good, Louisa said she was sure the Countess had no hand in sending them.”

“ She is no fool in that conclusion, fool as she has been in other and more material affairs.”

CHAPTER XVI.

Mr. Glentworth had not performed kind offices to young Penrhyn by halves. So soon as the articles of partnership were signed, the expected amount of half a year's income was advanced to him, with which he proceeded to furnish a small, but pretty, house in the vicinity of London, lying nearest to his counting-house, and possessing a flower-garden, which he knew to be the greatest possible desideratum to Louisa.

During the week they spent at Windsor all their necessary furniture was sent in; the more ornamental articles it was decided to leave to the choice of the fair mistress, and, as she had no visits to pay or receive, the occupation it gave Louisa saved her from any mortification she might have felt on sinking at once into the state of happy wifedom. In truth, it was a period of most delightful existence; for she had dear Isabella's gift, untouched, in her pocket, as she dared not mention it in her mother's house, nor even before the Palmers; and she had, therefore, the pleasure of spending it in purchasing those things Charles had personally a liking for, either in adorning his house or his wife. To surprise him, by finding on his table the

books he liked, or the escritoire he had occasion for, gave Louisa the most delightful moments life had hitherto afforded her; and could she have shown her sisters her pretty dwelling, her clever contrivances, and communicated to them her own felicity in the smile of her beloved husband, so complete, or rather so overflowing, would she have considered her happiness, perhaps she would have been alarmed for its continuance, and, like Philip of Macedon, prayed for a small misfortune to counterbalance her excess of joy.

This necessary counterpoise, the affectionate and simple-minded will readily conceive, would arise to Louisa from the absence of those "dear familiar faces" which had hitherto constituted her world. The love of sisters is not only a pure and holy thing, but there are situations in life when it is rendered an intense affection. Such was the case with the Granard family—they had no *father* whom "to love, honour, and obey;" *mother* was to them

"A word of fear,
Alarming to the daughter's ear:"

and they had no brother on whom they could lavish the confiding tenderness of their hearts, exult in his success, mourn in his disappointments, and follow him in imagination through the bright and busy world, from which they were otherwise excluded. No! to the sisterhood, exclusively, was every sister attached, in all the joys and sorrows, wants and wishes, which

belonged to their situation; and, although the early disappointment of their eldest, and, perhaps, best beloved, together with those opinions and fears of Lady Anne, too freely expressed, led them all to think more on the subjects of love and marriage than a wiser and worthier mother would have deemed desirable, the very circumstance only bound them more closely to each other. “Mamma desired to get rid of them, but they could never desire to part with each other,” and each felt that the man who would really win her heart and secure her gratitude must do it by being good to her sisters. It, therefore, followed that Mr. Glentworth was the idolized of both Georgiana and Helen; his conduct was the standard by which they were prepared to measure all other men; and, since it would have been difficult to find a higher, to a certain point the wishes of the mother were answered, although from different motives and with different views to her own.

When Lady Anne ceased “to nurse her wrath and keep it warm,” she began to congratulate herself on her situation; her family was lessened more than half—her two eldest and her *youngest* daughter (the one she had always concluded to be so plain that she would remain as a kind of perpetual blister) were actually gone, since it was hardly to be expected that Mary would be returned on her hands by a brother-in-law so likely to derive benefit in her councils to his young wife as Mr. Glentworth. No; three were actually

removed, and two daughters were not a burthen to complain of, especially as both might be considered very pretty and still improving, Helen being twenty, and Georgiana eighteen. They could take it by turns to drive out with her; somebody might now and then give them boxes for the Opera, and they could treat themselves to the Exhibition, or a Panorama; "it would not be difficult to get tolerably cheap, yet smart, dresses for two girls, though five had been overwhelming, and a woman looked well in company with two fair daughters. They were easily rendered picturesque, and the dullest man alive might say something smart about the Rotheles' earldom and the Oxford supporters; happily, Louisa could never appear in the same circle with herself and the girls, either to eclipse them by the brilliance of her beauty, or remind the world of her own degradation by a foolish marriage."

As these thoughts passed Lady Anne's mind, of course the power of increased expenditure, of launching out a *little*, and appearing somewhat more like herself, followed the train, and she began eagerly to look round at what she had lately designated her "circle;" it was certainly not like that "which a stone divides," for, of late years, it had become so contracted, that, if she were at this time to make a feast, alias, give a dinner, there would be a necessity to go forth into the highways and hedges of the *haut ton*, "to compel them to come in," nothing loath, as people are usually found in society of all descriptions.

An evening party would be better ; though the “ dear five hundred friends ” could not be found, yet fifty might !—a house still redolent with the *eclat* of two weddings, one of which had so wealthy a bridegroom, that he made the fortunes of the other, could not fail to be attractive to mothers and daughters, young men who wanted help in new connexions, and middle-aged men rich enough to buy wives of all descriptions. “ Yes ! the deed must be done. Lady Penrhyn should see that she was not a woman to sit down and weep under the load of disgrace brought upon her house by her own handsome, penniless, brother.”

Of course she must see it with her own eyes, for, although each lady felt as if the close union of their families had confirmed for ever the long-increasing contempt, and, in fact, personal dislike, each felt for the other ; yet, as they had had no quarrel, and were, as heretofore, dependent on each other for certain good offices neither could forego, it was evident, Lady Penrhyn must be the “ bright particular star ” of Lady Anne Granard’s party. And yet there were so many palpable objections to this, that it appeared pretty nearly worth while to make an open breach, whilst the opportunity was so invitingly accommodating, rather than incur the many evils attendant on her presence. First and foremost, she was beautiful, dressed well, and very expensively, and, from the exercise of her allowed talents, never failed to give the uninitiated an idea that she was the woman of fashion

par excellence. Even among the most experienced and discriminating of men, she rarely allowed the *élite* of the high-born or distinguished to escape her temporary allurements, so that she was the absolute horror, alike of the designing, whose baits she rendered nugatory, and the innocent attached ones, whose expectations she blighted, and whose young hearts were lacerated by the perfidy of those whom she misled. Of course she was a dangerous woman, from whom many would shrink, and certainly not one to whom Lady Anne could for a moment commit her daughters, either on the score of friendship, or example. Of the former there was little fear, for she had neither invited nor noticed any one of them more than she could help, and poor Louisa had been her aversion, evidently on the score of that resplendent beauty, which belongs exclusively to its youthfulness. Lady Penrhyn was quite handsome enough to have spared one ingredient in her cup of fascination, but, unfortunately, having been married in her teens, she expected to live in them, and, never being reminded by the trials to which her sex is subject, of the flight of years, and the inroads of suffering, expected time to stand still, and the first bloom of existence (the blue on the plum) to remain as stationary as her own taste, for the pleasures of flirtation.

In addition to these unamiable characteristics which insured a certainty that she would thwart any good fortune likely to befall her remaining daughters, Lady

Anne already knew that her brother and her brother's guide and controller, his countess, would not fail to resent so open a defiance of their advice, as must be implied by her invitation of a woman whose conduct drew upon her the animadversions of all her acquaintance, and who had openly discarded her only brother for making a connexion to which they had given decided approbation, and, which, being with the daughter of Lady Anne, could hardly be considered as respectful to her rank and connexions.

On the other hand, although she had not to thank Lady Penrhyn's kindness for any thing, she was obliged to her situation for great conveniences of many kinds. Lady Penrhyn's horses saved post-horses, her tickets of all kinds were convenient passports to the opera and the theatre, and the *recherché* dinners which preceded those amusements, and almost always happened when the cold leg of mutton would do very well for the girls and the servants, but would compel her to have recourse to the hotel, were by no means matters to be slighted. When to this was added the state dinners, to which she was always regularly invited, and held as a distinguished guest, and it was remembered how seldom this occurred in other houses since her widowhood, the vacillating mind took a new direction, and it was voted an impracticable thing to part with the baroness and her atmosphere of *agrémens*.

“ You appear to be thinking very deeply, dear mamma,” said Helen ; “ suppose we go over the way.

Mrs. Palmer is always glad to see us, and you will be better without our interruption."

"You are right, child, go; it is just about her tea time. There are more unlikely things than that I should follow you."

Happy and thankful, the dear young creatures obeyed in a trice, for they were impatient to tell their excellent friend that they had confessed, and were forgiven; and they were heard with the more pleasure, because Mrs. Palmer could inform them "that the paragraph which had made so happy a change in the feelings of Lady Anne had been written and paid for by her son Gooch, who was really a very clever hand at almost every thing."

"Paid for?" exclaimed the girls at the same moment.

"Yes, to be sure, my dears, every thing in this world is paid for in one kind of coin or other: the newspaper people owe Mr. Gooch no obligation, therefore were quite certain to take his money, and he had a right to indulge himself in such a thing, surely, as much as in buying a toy for his little boy."

"But I hope mamma will never know that Mr. Gooch ——."

Just then Lady Anne entered, all smiles and graciousness. The matter in question explained itself, for the newspaper was in Helen's hand. "I came in to beg a cup of tea, Mrs. Palmer, not to inquire into a secret, but I cannot help comprehending from the

words which have just dropped from my daughter that I am indebted to Mr. Gooch for giving so good a turn to the paragraph announcing Louisa's shocking marriage?"

"It is all true, and, therefore, drawn up as it ought to be," said Mr. Palmer. "And I hope before long to hear you say that so far from being a shocking thing, your new relation is really a son to you, and ——."

"Well, well, it may be so some time, but I must consult with you, dear Mrs. Palmer, on a subject of importance to me, and in which I must throw myself on your assistance as a friend and neighbour. I am, as you know, quite out of the way of giving parties, and that kind of thing, but at this time I find myself (for the sake of my daughters, of course) under the necessity of being 'at home' some evening before the month is out."

"Any thing we have that can be useful; and we can spare the butler and footman both, can't we, my dear?"

"Certainly," said Mrs. Palmer; "but I apprehend the cook is a more material person; but, perhaps, Lady Anne will order things from some of those great confectioners who undertake suppers at so much a head: it is, I believe, the best and quietest way a good deal."

"It was the way I did once," said Lady Anne, with a deep sigh, "but that which I can certainly do

no longer. I think supper tables may be laid in the rooms below for fifty, and I shall not invite more than sixty. I mean to give something as slight and inexpensive as possible; but I have been so long out of the way of these things, that I am really quite at a loss, and must throw myself on your kindness, as I hope you will be with me, and also Mr. and Mrs. Gooch. You must arrange in such a manner as not to blush for your own contrivances."

"Surely," thought Mrs. Palmer, "she is making this party on Louisa's account, and very properly she judges, but why can't she say so? God help her! she hardly knows how to manage it consistent with her rank and her narrow income."

It was a great relief when the kind-hearted woman heard her husband say:—

"When my daughters were at home, Mrs. Palmer used to make up very pretty quadrille parties, I must say, and she is a very good hand at arranging tables, and that kind of thing. I remember I was always applied to for one thing—'Papa will buy the cakes. Oh, yes, nobody chooses cakes so well as papa.'"

"Well, my dear, and so you did, though you always got them in the city."

"Well, then, Lady Anne, if you think well of it, and will let me know the day you will want them, I will take charge of the cake department, including, if I remember rightly, plum and plain, rout cakes, and macaroons, finger biscuits, and cracknels."

“Excellent!” cried his wife, “you have your lesson perfectly: and, as our cook really makes better jellies than I meet with any where else, I will undertake to provide a sufficiency of them. We can also manage to roast fowls and boil tongues when Lady Anne sends them in; dear heart! it is no joke to feed fifty or sixty people, at one o’clock in the morning.”

“Now I call the eating nothing,” said Mr. Palmer, “but the wine makes a great hole in a lady’s stock: she finds a single evening take ‘at one fell swoop’ what would have rendered her comfortable for a twelvemonth.”

Lady Anne sighed, as she said, “I must do as well as I can. I think sherry is more drank than any thing now-a-days, and I have a little of *that*—some Bucellas, too, which I got for the children. Unfortunately, I parted with my wine at Granard Park to the heir—I thought I should never want wine *then*.”

Mr. Palmer had known what it was to lose life’s dearest connexion; and the soft cadence with which Lady Anne alluded to her feelings as a widow awakened all the sympathy of his generous nature, and he eagerly cried out,

“You will do very well, my lady, very well indeed. I will send you in a couple of dozen of capital sherry, fit for the dons, and some hermitage, by no means to be sneezed at; any thing will do for dancing misses and masters; but, in every party, there are some people who know what’s what.”

It is scarcely necessary to add, that Lady Anne was so very obliging as to stay and partake the scalloped oysters and negus of her neighbours; but it is, so to say, that Mrs. Palmer, although the most artless of human beings, in the exercise of a sound understanding and a kind heart, so wound round the self-love of the offended mother, that she obtained Louisa's forgiveness, a promise of receiving herself and husband the following week, and a permission that they should consider the projected entertainment as the medium of presenting them to the world in a respectable point of view.

It is true the pardon was granted with so many precautions and conclusions, especially as regarded the poor bridegroom, that, if delivered as it was received, *verbatim et liberatim*, Mrs. Palmer could not fail to be assured it would be rejected, not only by the gentleman, but the fond wife, who honoured not less than she loved him. She well knew the power of intonation, and thought that, in the absence of the curled lip, the contemptuous twitch of the nose, and the supercilious toss of the head, her message might be acceptable for Louisa's sake, and she set out the following morning, accompanied by Helen and Georgiana, actually as happy as either of *them*, which is something to say, for the power of young Joy, like that of young Love, does not travel far on the dusty road of life in general.

Louisa had completed her furnishing vocation, and so nearly arrived at the bottom of her purse, that

Charles had positively, though most kindly, insisted that she should treat him no further that very morning ; she had bade him adieu with even more than her usual fondness, and looked towards him long after she had ceased to see him, and began to think how many hours must pass before she should speak either to him or any other person, when the sound of wheels caused her to look up, and become sensible that a carriage was approaching either her own house, or that to which it was united by a bondage not unlike that of the Siamese twins.

It was Mrs. Palmer's coach—" dear, good Mrs. Palmer." Before the bell could be rung, she had stepped through the casement-window, which opened into her little front grassplot, and flown to open the garden door. With what transports did she behold the faces of her sisters ! how soon were they all held in the arms and to the hearts of each other !

Yet Louisa looked beyond *them*, but she could not look beyond Mrs. Palmer, who slowly descended the steps, for her eyes were full of delicious tears, as she gazed on the lovely group, and congratulated herself on having brought them together. In another moment, Louisa's arms were around her also, welcoming her to Violet Lodge, and pouring on her a thousand thanks, yet asking, with trepidation, " have you brought the dear girls clandestinely ?"

" No, my dear child ; I brought them from Lady Anne's house, with her full permission ; and, what

is better, I bring an invitation for you and Mr. Penrhyn.”

Louisa burst into a passion of hysterical, though joyful tears.

“These children’s father had undoubtedly a heart in his bosom, which the mother never had, though she took Palm in last night. Yes! the father was amiable, and gave these sweet children his own nature. I trust he is happy now, for I am sure he had a very scanty share of happiness whilst he lived with Lady Anne.” Such were the wandering thoughts of Mrs. Palmer, as she entered the abode of the newly-united.

CHAPTER XVII.

Never was house so admired and praised as Louisa's, and never husband so lauded as hers, when her emotion had passed by, and her tongue resumed its function ; and if she could have given just such a partner, such a house, and such prospects as her own to each sister, she would have been satisfied that the world contained no other being so happy, save Isabella, who, in helping *all*, had a right to be happier than any. Charles said that letters might now be every day expected, and her anxiety to hear of the safety of the travellers was become her only one : hitherto, she had been, of course, uneasy under mamma's displeasure.

Alas ! how seldom are any of us quite happy at the passing moment.

Two golden hours, in which the astonishing news of the intended party was revealed to Louisa, with all of its contrivances, expenses, and mitigations, so far as they were elucidated, were given and said to be " done in her honour ;" but of this the young wife doubted ; nor could she help shaking her head, in a prognosticating manner. She said, " she knew what housekeeping cost, for she had a book, in which she put down

every thing ; and, although she had only a footman and a cook, and had only received the partners of her husband and their ladies once to dinner, it had shewn her clearly what mamma could do, and what she could *not* do, and she deprecated the party in every respect, save as it would introduce her kind friend Mrs. Gooch to a circle which she had repeatedly said “ she should like to see once in her life or so.”

“ But, surely,” said Georgiana, “ you should be glad on our account. We have no good Mr. Glentworth now to take us any where ; and our little home-circle is so much thinned, we want some amusement from without. We are not like you, expecting a husband at dinner-time, who will sit with us all the evening.”

“ Well, my love, that is all very true,” replied Louisa, colouring with the consciousness of being a great monopolist ; “ but I cannot help fearing more pain will arise to you eventually than the pleasure is worth ; and I trust, that when mamma has once received us, she will allow you to come here frequently, as you are not afraid of a long walk ; and if she cannot spare the page to attend you, I can send William, and dear Charles himself can drive you home in his cab ; nobody will see you are three by lamplight. Oh ! I foresee so much pleasure for us all. But who is mamma going to invite ?”

“ I have heard her mention very few names. Sir Henry Calthorpe, your Brighton lover, was the first, which I thought very indelicate, considering he would

meet as a bride the girl who refused him. 'Tis true she did not know it——”

“ She means him to become your suitor, Helen, because you are very like me, you know, so be on your guard. He is a silly young man, and not a very good one ; you must not have him—marriage is a very serious thing.”

“ Lord and Lady Allerton mamma named also.”

“ I don't know which of them I dislike most—they were the ruin of our dear Mary's peace of mind, and her constitution also.”

“ Sir William and Lady Anstey, their son and two daughters, she named, and the Marquess of Wentworthdale ; two Mr. Allinghams, whom she has met at Lord Penrhyn's ; Colonel Hawthornden and Mr. Rickmansworth, the barrister ; Mrs. Ryall and her sister.”

“ But she wants, of all things, some kind of a lion,” cried Helen, “ a Turk, or a Rajah, dressed in satin, who eats with his fingers, or she would put up with a distinguished author, I believe, if she could get one ; or the Chinese lady, or a Welch harper, if he had white, silky hair. She would rather have Sir William Honeywood Hales Courtenay than any body, a great deal ; but he is in prison, and they won't let him out, dear heart ! What with his moustachios, his long beard, his richly embroidered crimson dress, and his Maltese cross and sword, he would be invaluable.”

“ He is mad, perfectly mad !” cried Louisa.

“ But he is no worse for that, mamma says.”

“ Poor soul !” ejaculated Mrs. Palmer, “ she must be far gone herself.”

“ Such a person would save paying singers, which she can ill afford,” said Helen ; “ and surely it would be folly to afford them, in any case, with a daughter who can warble a simple ballad as well as you, and another who can sing duets with mine most delightfully. You have no idea how well Mrs. Penrhyn and Mrs. Gooch sing together ; the first has the finer voice, the last the better instruction ; but they manage admirably together,” said Mrs. Palmer.

While these observations were passing, at the happy dwelling of the lately proscribed daughter, her mother, in a state of great perturbation, wrote and re-wrote note after note, to her dear friend Lady Penrhyn, all of which were meant, in fact, to say, “ I invite you earnestly, but I hope you won't come.” It is a very difficult thing for the most cunning, when they say one thing and mean another, to hide their wishes from one as practised as themselves ; and an awkward thing to commit yourselves in writing at all where a secret or a scheme is concerned. Lady Anne had just determined to abandon all writing, save the common *routine* card-call upon her friend, and leave to the chances of conversation the impression she desired to make, when a knock was heard, and, in another moment, as if she had possessed the power “ to call spirits from the vasty deep” of luxury, Lady Penrhyn stood before her.

“I have been dying to see you,” said the beauty, “for I knew, of course, you were completely *au desespoir*; that wretched paragraph would destroy your nerves.”

“Not in the least; I saw it was an abbreviation from the first annunciation of the marriage, as communicated by the earl of Rotheles; here it is.”

Lady Penrhyn glanced her eye over the paper, and said, “Could you spare me this, just to shew Penrhyn? The fact is, he is perfectly lost for want of Charles, and, of course, very cross; which was the reason I could not get to you before; and, in the course of his pets and his papers, he has really gone abominable lengths in abusing the poor fellow for making such a low connection.”

“Low connection!—*low!*” cried Lady Anne, with an absolute shriek; “the granddaughter of the Earl of Rotheles termed *low* by a baron of two descents! this is beyond bearing.”

“Not *low*, my dear creature; that is not the word; but imprudent, poor, a mere love-match, a positive irremediable, ruinous affair.”

“The Earl of Rotheles is of a very different way of thinking; he supposes that a young man, with next to nothing, that marries a young woman of family, who takes him from the beggary of dependence and secures him an increasing income, which begins with a thousand per ann., may be termed “a *fortunate* youth.”

“But, supposing this is the case, the income is derived from trade; it is the consequence of degradation.”

“ The degradation which made my son-in-law, Mr. Glentworth, the possessor of uncounted thousands, and enables him to support *your* brother, Lady Penrhyn, who will find him a somewhat kinder patron than your husband, I have a notion ; he will not upbraid him on the score of gaining a place of a hundred and fifty pounds a-year, well earned by his drudgery in his lordship’s service. Shockingly as my daughter has thrown herself away, I must say I have pitied Charles a thousand times, and always considered him an amiable, ill-used young man.”

“ As to Louisa throwing herself away on *my* brother, Lady Anne Granard, it is too ridiculous. Charles has five thousand pounds of his own, which, I am told, he has settled on his wife ; those very people mentioned as their friends being her trustees ; and when my father’s second wife dies, he will have an estate of eight hundred a year, hitherto tied up to pay her jointure and my two younger sisters’ fortunes ; and with his person and connections you must yourself see he might have done better.”

“ As to person, my daughter’s pretensions may surely——”

Lady Anne checked herself, for she heard a carriage stop at the door, and her daughters enter the house ; and she had not made up her mind as to the turn she should give to their conciliatory visit. In fact, both ladies had, in the course of their recriminatory dialogue, seen so clearly, that in worldly matters the

couple in question were most equally matched, and neither of them could doubt so happily, that they found it a difficult thing not to own the truth so near their lips; and when the sisters, too happy to contain their joy and gratitude, broke on the angry *tête-à-tête*, their cold hearts and laboured malignity, to their own astonishment, gave way before the genuine atmosphere of better feelings.

“ Oh! mamma, thank you a thousand times for letting us go; Louisa is so very thankful, and so very happy!”

“ But she did cry so hard when she first saw us and became aware of your kindness, that it would have made any body else cry.”

“ Very sentimental, indeed! Then it seems she is forgiven?” said Lady Penrhyn.

“ It would not do for me to oppose Lord Rotheles, as you very well know,” answered Lady Anne.

“ Oh! I don't blame you at all; Lord Penrhyn has vexed me so much that I mean to see Charles before long, I assure you; for, after all, he is my only brother — pray, what kind of a crib did you find them stuffed into?”

“ Crib! indeed, it is the prettiest little house that ever was beheld.”

“ With a greengrocer's repository on one side, and a coalshed on the other?”

“ There is nothing of the kind even within view,” cried Helen, warmly, “ nor any one object that could

offend the most fastidious eye, as Mrs. Palmer observed ; a duchess might delight in it ; every thing is so clean without, and so good within : such beautiful carpets and rugs to match ! such handsome chiffoniers, and elegant books ! it does one good to look at them ; and Louisa herself, the prettiest thing of all ; her bright hair in bands, and altogether such a sweet *coiffure* ! How very lovely she is !”

“ And how *good* !” chimed in Helen ; “ she understands the necessity for care, and the duties of a wife, and she does so love her husband—you can’t think !”

A sneer came over the faces of both ladies, as the word “ love” was pronounced ; yet each said in her heart, “ it is not, in *her* case, a bad thing to love, seeing she cannot be unmarried now ;” but the dowager observed, in a cold tone—

“ I beg you will not admire the romantic, young ladies ; for, depend upon it, I shall never give way to it. If circumstances induce me to admit your sister and Mr. Penrhyn to visit here *occasionally*, let it be always understood that, although I may pardon, yet I shall never approve their union ; it is one thing to bear a misfortune with fortitude, and another to encourage its repetition.”

The poor girls curtsied, and withdrew to their own cheerless apartments, where alone they could luxuriate in another’s happiness—that other, their blooming and beloved Louisa. Whilst thinking or talking over all those little particulars in her situation, which ap-

peared like gems on the brow of beauty, diffusing brilliance as a whole, yet each possessing an individual value, they alike seemed to think that the happiest thing belonging to her was the power of hearing from Isabella and Mary most frequently. "You see," said Georgiana, "Charles will have letters from Mr. Glentworth, and Louisa letters from our sisters, at the same time; and, between the two, they will learn every thing that belongs to them: they will, as it were, eat at the same table, dress in the same colours, see the same things, and think with the same thoughts; how happy Louisa will be! she will have her old friends in her new home."

Of course, the poor girl knew little of those missives called "letters of business," which, although they direct all the great affairs of mankind, and are constantly employed in sending forth or recalling that mighty power which commands men, controls circumstances, constitutes the sinews of war and the charm of peace, has little to do in wafting either a smile or "sigh from Indus to the Pole." Little did they dream in how few lines might be given all that their two brothers-in-law were likely to say to each other. The *free* pen, prone to pour out the suggestions of artless affection, vivid imagination, or domestic anecdote, is as much woman's especial instrument as the needle: how many heavy hours have been lightened by both? how much pleasure has the former communicated to others? how often has the latter tranquillized the spirits, or diverted the anxieties of her own heart!

So delighted were the dear girls with their visit, that the grand affair of the party was actually forgotten ; for, cribbed and stinted in all the common pleasures of their age and station, they were wont to live much on the heart ; and their unavoidable loss of two sisters, and more especially Louisa's supposed uneasiness and enforced estrangement, had rendered them exceedingly solicitous respecting her ; and at this time she might be said to "engross them wholly." Not so their lady-mother, who was at this very juncture managing to start her scheme of a party in such a manner, that the idea appeared to proceed from Lady Penrhyn, who honestly confessed "that her curiosity was exceedingly excited on the subject of how the couple in question appeared since their degradation, and whether they actually retained the power of looking any body in the face who was really somebody.

"Besides," she added, "though it is a weakness, and certainly the last in the world a woman in my circle ought to indulge, to you, my dear Lady Anne, who cannot, under existing circumstances, condemn me for it, I may say there is something awkward, even painful, in losing sight all at once, in so disagreeable a way, of your only brother — one who in childhood was, from the death of our mother, consigned to my especial tenderness, and who is really of so sweet a temper, so cheerful a disposition, loved me so well, and for my sake exerted himself so much, and has borne so much (I may say) from Lord Penrhyn, that altogether I find

it by no means agreeable to hold him in the light of a banished man, and should rejoice to meet him in any house but my own."

"I am sure I would get up a little affair on purpose to enable you to do so, dear Lady Penrhyn; but, in my narrow circumstances (to you I do not hesitate to refer to them), it is an object, I confess; and, when one has few servants and few things, the hiring of plate, and so forth, becomes very expensive, you know."

"Don't hesitate on that account, I beseech you; let Fanchette come in a hackney-coach in the morning, and I will direct the housekeeper to send you something of every thing—plate, candlesticks, lamps, damask—and you won't take it amiss if we should happen to have game or poultry come up that I put that amongst the conveniences; and I am sure you will permit me to invite a friend or two, for you know I only deal with choice spirits, the *élite* of the *beau monde*."

Much as Lady Anne had rejoiced in the *ruse* which had so materially assisted her plans, yet these latter words produced a kind of cold trickling through her frame; she remembered the Countess of Rotheles's advice, and she well knew the very pointed words and looks Lady Allerton could assume when it suited her humour to be censorious, and was well aware that every particular of the evening's entertainment would be transmitted with a jaundiced tint to Rotheles Castle, for the amusement and animadversion of her invalid brother. He must see the propriety of young Pen-

rhyn's being well with his brother-in-law, who was known to be well with the ministry, and, of course, of meeting with his sister; therefore, if she would forego her usual habits, and especially relinquish a certain Russian count attached to the embassy, who had succeeded the late German baron, all would be well; but, if she persisted in drawing attention and awakening scandal, there was no saying where the mischief would stop.

That the countess knew her brother, the earl, made an addition to her income she was well aware, but she was not less so that the lady did not know to what amount, and she trusted the secret would remain undivulged; nevertheless, it had struck her as by no means unlikely, that the amiable lady in question might suggest the propriety of diminishing her allowance (be it either small or large) now her family was diminished, and, of course, dreaded exposing herself by any possible error of conduct to such an event. Hastily arranging her necessities, her wishes, her fears, and her desires, she thus began to address the dear friend she alike dreaded, despised, and persevered in attaching to herself and her measures:—

“Bring any one you deem a desirable *parti*, of course, but allow me to observe, dear Lady Penrhyn, that——”

“Yes! I see, *that* they must be really *crème à la crème*. I know all that, because you are compelled to ask what Mary Wolstonecraft, in days gone by, would term ‘the square-elbowed, family drudge,’ Mrs. Pal-

mer, and her furbelowed daughters-in-law, who will probably carry enough of the scarlet fever about them, to remind you unpleasantly of the officiousness which preserved the lives of three daughters, when two might have been parted with advantageously enough."

"You never were a mother, my dear friend, or——"

"Or I should have been glad to part with the whole garland of roses wherewith Fate had crowned me. No, thank Heaven! like the fat king, once so enchanting and afterwards so abdominal, I have no *predilections* save for the distinguishing few who love to bask in *mes beaux yeux*. However, depend upon it, any persons I may bring, or cause to come, will be the very exquisites *de la société*, and will sweeten your city connexions, my own poor Charles among the rest — *him* for whom my affections had often ambitioned a far different fate."

"Allow me to say, that if your ladyship could contrive to bear his company one whole evening, it might have the happiest effects. Count Beniowskoff would be reduced to despair, and withdraw his attentions. *Strangers* would give you the credit of attracting a fine young man, even in his honeymoon, with a very charming woman; and *friends* would praise you for showing that family affection often exhibited by royalty itself, and always to be admired and approved in the daughter of a mere country gentleman."

Poor Lady Anne! the three last words lost her all the benefit of her previous harangue. Lady Penrhyn.

who had almost determined at once to appear charming as a Circean nymph, yet correct as a vestal, by flirting only with her own handsome brother, recalled by the pride of rank to the memory of her highly-respectable but very *remote* affinity to aristocracy, determined at once to assert the privileges given by nature, which, in bestowing the patent of beauty, had outstripped the Herald's Office. With a smile, in which there was more of malice than affection, she hastily bade adieu ; and Lady Anne, for the present, felt as if Fanchette and her coach full of accommodations, heavy as they might once be supposed to be, were suddenly swallowed up in that awful sea, to which so many refractory spirits have been exorcised and consigned.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Though Mr. Penrhyn had returned to his dinner at a somewhat late hour, such was the impatience of his lady to be received, and his kind estimate of those feelings in her which he loved to cherish, that when their social and happy meal was over, they set out to Welbeck Street with as little trepidation on the lady's part as could be expected, and as much resolution and patience on that of the gentleman as might be required. He had all the inclination to pay Lady Anne the homage she deemed due to her rank, and tender her the respect himself held due to his wife's mother; but the fond and deep regard in which that wife was held, his estimation of the probity, sincerity, and simplicity of her loving nature, and her sound understanding, prevented him from esteeming her mother's character, and either acceding to her demands, or acknowledging value in her protection. He was now eight and twenty—an age when the nature of man demands independence as necessary to happiness and respectability—he had known what it was, “in sueing long to bide,” though not so long as many; therefore, he had neither depressed the manliness of his spirit,

nor soured the kindness of his temper, although the many fears of a lover had been added to his solicitude. Either the nature of his own situation, or the company that his mean brother-in-law and his flirting sister called around them, had given him a disgust for political and fashionable society (which is, in fact, very generally to be found in those who are engaged in public offices, conscious that they do the work for which others are paid), so that nothing could be more agreeable to him than the change in his situation effected by Mr. Glentworth's kindness. That gentleman had discovered that he had not only the industry which enabled him to fulfil his own duties and Lord Penrhyn's also, but talents which could be advantageously employed in a higher sphere, and was well aware that the exercise of his faculties would add to his happiness quite as much as his fortune. He was now proving the truth of these surmises: the situation which had given to his constant love the bride of his heart, was, in all its demands, accepted as a gift to be proud of, a station to glory in. What a different man was the responsible merchant—the respectable partner of a long-established house—the happy husband of a lovely, modest, and contented wife—to the young man who filled a place at table as the *permitted*, not *invited*, the unrewarded labourer for an ungrateful taskmaster—the handsome dangler, allowed to join in a quadrille, on the condition of being an automaton before and after—the listener to young members, and old women of rank—the person who

must bore nobody, but whom every body had a right to bore !

What a life for a free man, born to the use of dogs and horses, pure air, and wide-spreading moors !—no wonder that, although junior partner, and as modest as he was high-spirited, he trod his counting-house floor with a step vigorous and springy as the young captain of a man-of-war, for he felt that he was an emancipated slave ; nay, more, a British merchant. If not “ monarch of all he surveyed,” he was certainly monarch of all he desired, which is probably more than any one of those mighty personages who rule mankind could have honestly asserted.

Lady Anne received her daughter as gracefully, and, perhaps, as affectionately, as she knew how ; and she could not look in the open countenance of Charles without seeing that he was much too happy to be looked into insignificance ; so she made a virtue of necessity, accepted him graciously “ as a son who might hereafter be useful to her, seeing she had the misfortune to be the mother of so many daughters who had not a single brother to protect them.” She next adverted to the party she was giving on *their* account, inquired how far it was possible for Louisa to assist her arrangements, which, being ascertained, retired to her dressing-room, by no means sorry that the lateness of the hour precluded the necessity of delaying them for refreshments.

Yet the young couple gladly remained nearly an

hour afterwards with the delighted sisters, who naturally desired to increase their slight acquaintance with that new relation, who, in holding Louisa's happiness in his keeping, in a great measure held their's also. The conversation which took place now furnished subjects for many days afterwards, to the surprise of Lady Anne, who could not conceive how they could either talk, or think, on any thing but that which had all the charm of novelty to recommend it, and might be the hinge on which it was probable their future fortunes might turn for life.

The day previous to this important affair, as Mrs. Palmer had by this time discovered that her noble neighbour's dwelling was as nearly unfurnished in the materials required for that vulgar, but indispensable, operation connected with supper as could be well imagined, she summoned the young ladies to choose, from an immense accumulation of old and of modern china, those things they considered the most pretty and useful. In this task they were assisted by Mrs. Gooch, who had established herself for the day at her father's, that she might hear "all about things," concluding (very falsely) that Lady Anne's "at home" must be very superior to any thing it had hitherto been her lot to witness. That it would have been so in her husband's lifetime there is no doubt, though that husband's heart had been wrung to the core in witnessing it—under "existing circumstances," to use her own expression, she must do as well as she could.

When every thing likely to be wanted had been put aside, in order to be taken over the way when night had flung her convenient mantle upon these neighbourly doings, the three young people adjourned to the breakfast-room, where Mrs. Palmer was so deeply engaged in reading a newly-received letter, that, to the surprise of all, she did not raise her eyes from the paper to ask “ what they had fixed upon ? ”—and, as she proceeded, her continual interjections of “ dear me !—poor creature !—noble fellow ! ” showed how deeply she was absorbed in the perusal.

“ What can you have got hold of, mamma ? ” cried Mrs. Gooch ; “ you look as anxious as Tom does when an apology comes for delaying payments.”

“ Why, my dear, I have got a very kind and really a very interesting letter from a young lord, whom I never expected to remember me.”

“ A young lord ! I never knew you had such an acquaintance ! ”

“ Yet you must remember Augusta Hales, for you were very attentive to her.”

“ Of course, I remember the poor girl you brought home to die here, when you married papa. I used to think you loved her better than us, which made me angry ; but I loved her myself, notwithstanding. She was a sweet creature, and, as I now recollect, was the Honourable Augusta Hales.”

“ This letter is from her brother Frederic ; a lovely boy he was then—so was his brother Arthur ; but he

was younger and noisier, so that I did not let him come often, poor dear; but Frederic was here frequently, dear fellow. If you will sit down, (all of you I mean) I will begin the letter again."

" "My dear madam—You will probably have forgotten me, for you live in the busy world, and you are too much accustomed to be kind and good to your fellow-creatures, for a single instance, to dwell much on your memory. I must therefore remind you of my dear sister Augusta Hales, to whom you were as a tender mother, and who died in your arms, in order to say your correspondent is her eldest brother, then little Fred Hales.

" "Whatever may be your recollection or oblivion of me and mine, it would ill become us to forget you; and, indeed, dear Mrs. Palmer, we have never done so; though our long residence in the East, and our many removals since, have forbidden us the pleasure of seeing you; and it was always the opinion of my dear father (of whose death you would hear) that it was foolish to correspond with persons we were never likely to meet again.'

" "Arthur is in the navy, and a brave, worthy fellow as ever was born. I am indebted to him for my life within the last few days, but that debt is, in my own opinion, less than what I owe him, for the constant love and kindness of his whole life towards me. I ought not, however, to undervalue the courage and perseverance, through which I was rescued, when the

storm ran so high that no reward could induce one man on board to save the gentleman, who, in the confusion, fell overboard. I will honestly confess that this circumstance brought you and your kindness more strongly to my mind than might otherwise have been the case. You may perhaps remember my dear sister wove an armlet of her own hair, and that of our buried mother, which she insisted on clasping round my arm; it had, for a long time, occupied my wrist, though somewhat too wide, and by this memento of her love I was actually preserved; for Arthur, I know not how, got his fingers into it and kept me up. It is true, both would have been lost if two of the very men who had refused to venture for money had not volunteered to rescue *him*.

“ ‘ This happened in the Channel during the late gales: we are now——’ ”

“ I read about it—Tom shewed me the place in the paper where the Honourable Lieutenant Hales saved the Viscount Meersbrook, returning from Persia; but there was not one word about the bracelet; *no, not a syllable!* ”

Mrs. Gooch spoke the last words in great anger, and Mrs. Palmer, wiping her eyes, said, “ Poor things! their love and their danger is very affecting; the bracelet signified nothing.”

“ Indeed, I think it signified a great deal; for I helped to weave it myself, that I did, and was sent out of the room when Frederic pulled off his jacket to have it put on; and I am quite sure Lord Meersbrook

will remember it as well as I do, for he thought it very unnecessary to send me away, and said — but pray go on with the letter.”

As Mrs. Gooch’s recollections heightened her colour, Mrs. Palmer took her advice.

“ ‘ We are now at the Isle of Wight, and both under medical help, but, as we get better every day, I purpose proceeding to London on the 17th instant, and shall do ourselves the pleasure of seeing you the following morning, as we have the satisfaction of learning, from a friend of yours, (Mr. Mansel, visiting Ryde) that you and Mr. Palmer are well, and his fair daughters all married most happily.

“ ‘ Till then, my dear madam, accept the warm esteem of two young men who will ever hold themselves sincerely obliged to you for your long-continued kindness to their still regretted sister, for we are one in all our feelings. With best regards to Mr. Palmer, believe me, your attached friend and servant,

“ ‘ MEERSBROOK.’ ”

“ The 17th instant ! where can the letter have been laid ? it is put in at Portsmouth ten days after its date ; to-day is the 17th ; they will be here to-morrow. How glad I shall be to see them ! though they will be grown quite out of knowledge, and covered with whiskers like other young men, I dare say. No matter ; their hearts are in the right place, whatever they look like. They used to be remarkably like each other in person, and there is scarcely a year between

them in age, but there was a difference in their manners, certainly. Frederic was gentle, and would sit with a book an hour together by his sister's side. Arthur loved her dearly, but he used to slam the doors and drive the cats about ; he could not be quiet, for the life of him."

Georgiana and Helen went home so interested by the contents of the letter, that, when they had given an account of the dozens of China plates and dishes, and the complete muster of wine-glasses, goblets, and tumblers looked out, they could not forbear to mention kind Mrs. Palmer's correspondence, or rather her letter from Lord Meersbrook. Lady Anne inclined her ear very seriously to the subject, observing that she knew their mother very well ; "she was a fair woman, yet her hair was raven black, and she was a great Lincolnshire heiress. Of course, her eldest son gets her estates ; the youngest will have nothing. They did very right to put him in the navy, for the father's services were great, and he ought to be pushed. That was matter of chance, however, since Lord Meersbrook could have done nothing for him ; he had been abroad ever since his father's death."

Helen looked at Georgiana, and thought sons were very different to daughters ; "if she were as rich as Lord Meersbrook, Georgiana would have a fortune tomorrow. Dear Mary, too, who was so poorly, and so kind to every one, how delightful it would be to make her independent !"

Her reverie was interrupted by her mamma telling her to run over to Mrs. Palmer, and entreat her to secure the brothers for the following evening. "And do you, Georgy, contrive to tell Penrhyn all the particulars of this drowning affair; for I remember the bare facts being mentioned at Lord Penrhyn's, and he will tell them with effect, avoiding rhodomontade without omitting pathos. I beg *you* will not relate the circumstance to any other person; it might place you in an awkward predicament."

"I am sure I will obey you strictly, dear mamma; but really I cannot see how it would be possible for any body to reflect on me, who never was in a ship in my life; what could they say?"

"Say! why the most injurious thing in the world; if you were to relate the affair in the same words you used to me, and which I expect you to use to Mr. Penrhyn, in the presence of his sister, she would say you were in love with Lieutenant Hales immediately."

"How shameful, how cruel! I am sure I never was in love in my life — never! I think he is a very brave, noble creature, of course; but I have never seen him."

"I wish you never may," muttered Lady Anne; but she remembered her lions would be imperfect if divided; considered their acquisition a most lucky chance at such an advanced period in the season, and could not fail to rejoice in the legitimate reason they afforded for asking the Palmers and their connections.

Mrs. Gooch was married, and therefore perfectly welcome to the honour of having partly woven the bracelet which saved Lord Meersbrook's life ; but, surely, a little flattery might render her willing to discover that Georgiana had a hand in it. Her husband was evidently a sensible man, and he might have given his wife a little more sense than she could have derived from her downright father and her silly mother-in-law, who were really as great a pair of noodles as ever were exhibited in the pages of a modern novel, under the cognomen of " amiable rustics." To think of the price they pay, and the charming company they bring ; five pounds in jelly, ten in cakes—for, though he only offered to order them, I shall allow him to pay for them—two dozen of very fine sherry, and a dozen and half of choice Hermitage, to say nothing of the loan of things innumerable, and the gift of Lord Meersbrook, before any creature has set eyes on him since his drowning, whilst he comes fresh from the East a kind of young Sultan or Cham of Tartary ; and to these gifts surely may be added the power that young Gooch possesses of sending to the journals (which are, nine times out of ten, horrible things, and will eventually ruin the country) a really elegant, well-written account of the affair. I wonder if he has any acquaintance with French history, and can talk of *petit soupers*, and the wits and beauties which reigned before the horrible revolution ! I should not wonder if he had, strange as it may seem, and certainly it may

tell admirably. *Miladi la mère* scarcely to be deemed *un peu passée* being affected by the languor of sorrow, not years (no one allows the effects of time now, which is perfectly proper.) Yes, the whole affair will make a capital paragraph, and, when united with natural commendations of the young sailor, must be positively astounding. I like him not, but younger brothers will be born (more the pity), and they are rarely in a hurry to die. Had this young man been drowned, he would have deserved celebrity indeed; in fact, had the elder sunk, it would have done as well, since he would have succeeded immediately, and received property and praise, at the same time. How seldom do young people see their own interest, especially sailors. I never knew a prudent man amongst them. No blame could arise to him from his brother's drowning, but an immense profit, which he literally cast away with his own hands. However, his folly may tell in a paragraph — beyond that, he is a person I could not encourage."

CHAPTER XIX.

Georgiana and Helen, though by no means troubled with the feverish anxiety, or elated by the far-seeing hopes of their mother, were yet as pleased with the gay doings of the following day as girls generally are. They rose at an early hour, for they knew that the male part of Mr. Palmer's servants were gone forth, long before, to find any thing "green and pretty" wherewith to decorate the rooms; and their own boy was, at the same time, employed in stripping Louisa's garden of its floral treasures. They endeavoured to supply, by the tasteful disposition of that which was obtained, the want of greenhouse plants and costly exotics, and were so successful, that even Lady Anne, "who had seen so much, and understood the matter so well," expressed herself really charmed by the *coup d'œil* of her drawing-room, and proceeded to give orders for the distribution of lights in the most judicious and liberal manner.

"To want light is to want everything; nothing can be gay or splendid without it; a gloomy room casts a chill on the spirits, and sends people away, by dozens, to find a more inspiring atmosphere; nevertheless,

you must remember, towards the close of the evening, never to sit near any brilliant light. When people grow pale and exhausted, they should always contrive to sit in shadow. I have known a sallow woman, with good features, manage to look well by nestling into the shadow of a window-curtain, or amongst the plants. If eyes are bright, they sparkle more effectively ; if dull, their deficiencies are hidden : there is quite as much knowledge required for hiding a defect as displaying a beauty. Who would think that Lady Penrhyn was crooked ?”

“ Crooked, mamma ! only in her temper, surely ?”

“ No ; in her shape, which has a positive *twist*, though not a great one ; and she manages to dress so judiciously ! not one of her acquaintance guesses such a thing. I have hitherto kept her secret ; but on her conduct to-night depends my continuing to do so, but of course I expect you to guard it.”

“ I cannot imagine how it can be hidden,” said Helen, musing.

“ Of course you can't, at your age and with your shape, child ; but, under different circumstances, you would find the benefit of cotton-wool and an intelligent *soubrette*. Lady P. also finds a great advantage in that perpetual change of posture she adopts, and a kind of wriggling motion adapted to her laugh.”

“ And she is always laughing a little ; never heartily, but a kind of hi, hi ! — not so merry as silly, in my opinion.”

“ You are too young, Georgiana, to have an opinion ; for, having seen nothing of the world, you are not able to compare and combine circumstances in such a manner as to form a just judgment. No person of fashion ever laughs out from the impulse of the heart, like old Mr. Palmer, for instance (surely that daughter of his who is coming here knows better) ; but many people, of the highest grade, allow themselves to giggle a little, especially when they have fine teeth—and you know hers are perfect. Many persons must laugh when a great person or an acknowledged wit says a clever thing, such as a smart repartee, or a really good pun. Satirical people always expect a short laugh to follow the effusions of their — their *malignity*, shall I call it ?”

“ I never would pay them that compliment,” said Helen.

“ Indeed you must ; girls in your situation must follow, not lead. Nothing less than an heiress who is also a beauty can pretend to a high tone of morality ; but I am leaving the subject. Lady Penrhyn says wild things, ill-natured things, and at times witty things, from no motive whatever but that of keeping up the laugh and the motion, which diverts the eye from the only defect in her person ; and it certainly answers. Her tact is admirable, and offers an example to all young people, since none of them know what may be required for themselves in future life.”

With this sage and just observation Lady Anne left

her daughters to finish their pleasant labours in the drawing-room, while she inspected the rooms below, by much the more important, because the more expensive affair. Nothing could exceed the suavity of her manners to those servants of her neighbours now employed on her account, and who actually found themselves repaid by the smiles of her they termed *a real lady* for extra service and great personal exertion. It is true, they were a good-natured and respectable set of servants, who had lived so long in their places that they might be said, by a happy contagion, to have caught kindly feelings from their superiors, and, having assisted in saving the lives of the young ladies, gave them an interest in their pleasures, and a real delight in seeing those fair young faces lighted up with joy. The marriage of Mr. Glentworth had been a subject of importance and exultation to them all; nor had they failed to rejoice in Miss Louisa's marrying "the man of her heart," spite of her they wickedly termed "the *old* lady," but now they saw more of her; scarcely a lord was thought good enough for her daughters.

"Helen," said Georgiana, "just lay down that wreath a moment, and look at the two young gentlemen coming up the street."

"They are fine-looking young men, certainly, and as tall as Charles Penrhyn. Ah! they stop at Mr. Palmer's; they must be Lord Meersbrook and his sailor-brother; I wonder which is he?"

“Most likely he who is the shorter of the two;—no! he goes in the first, and is, of course, the eldest; but we have no time for conjecturing now.”

Nevertheless, Georgiana did, for some minutes, fix her eyes on the door, not with any expectation of seeing the parties come out, or any desire that they would or would not be amongst their evening guests, but in the recollection of those sweet feelings which, the morning before, had thrilled her heart, and made the tears gush into her eyes, as her busy imagination painted the embrace of the two brothers, when both became sensible that they indeed lived. When Arthur knew he had secured his inestimable prize, and Frederic felt that he possessed in such a brother

more than a world
Of one entire and perfect chrysolite,

she soon afterwards became busy, and affected to be gay; for she remembered what her mother had said, and was sensible that looking at the young gentleman was not the way to render her less liable to the charge of admiring him. She had a vivid imagination, great sensibility, an acute perception of all that was noble and excellent in character and conduct; more especially where it bore on that dear, fraternal tie, which she felt to be the life of life to her. Such feelings were more especially awakened, at the moment, in Georgiana than any other of the party; because, during their busy time in the China closet, she had

been saved, by Helen, from an accident which, if not of great moment, would at least have prevented her from enjoying the pleasure she expected, and had necessarily stimulated her warm and grateful emotions.

Notwithstanding Lady Penrhyn departed in the manner we have seen, she did not fail to fulfil her promise, and was the first person (with the exception of Charles and his bride) to present herself in Lady Anne's drawing-room. Her reception of her brother was most affectionate—there are times when the most artificial, by habit, become natural; when the early memories of the heart, for a short time at least, spring up as a fountain of living waters, overflowing the selfish vanities and conventional incrustations which the world has planted—giving honest smiles to the countenance; artless, yet loving words to the tongue; and the gratified heart seems restored to a new childhood. Nothing could exceed the delight with which Penrhyn observed this change in his sister, who had never been herself, in his eyes, since her marriage; and whose manners, as they were generally displayed, would have been disgustingly painful at this time, when the sweet simplicity and integrity of his wife had imbued his very being with a just preference for nature to art.

But company poured in—he was too busy, and his lovely bride too beautiful, to preserve him in a frame of mind congenial with that which he desired to adopt.

Pride would mingle with his pleasure, the world would run away with him for a short time, for, on every side, he heard congratulations on his marriage, or the advantages of his situation, as contrasted with his former one. There might be some shrugs and some sneers amongst the party on the "all for love" young couple, or the young man who had banished himself to that horrible Siberia, "the city;" but these were not heard by him, nor were they uttered by any of the aristocratic part of the community. Much as it is the fashion to deride the nobility, by decrying their morality and denying their ability, even by those who have the *entrée*, and therefore may be supposed to know them the best, in point of fact, at the present day, there are amongst them an immense proportion of good and sensible people. If the whole were as much distinguished by nature as by rank, it would be much more extraordinary than that "a *few* young men were wild and foolish, a few *old* ones prejudiced and conceited—that amongst a race of women, distinguished as much by their personal charms as their titles, some should be weak and vain, others prejudiced and presuming. In what town or village, amongst what class of female life, shall we find an exemption from these faults? The possession of beauty leads to an overweening admiration of it, and wealth gives a power of preserving this boon of nature in a manner forbidden to the poor, which will account fully for the extreme and perhaps blameable solicitude a few continue to feel on the sub-

ject. They are *few* in comparison with the excellent mothers, the affectionate and dutiful wives, the well-educated, unaffected, and fondly-attached daughters who form the great portion of the aristocracy of Great Britain.

To the surprise of Lady Anne and Lady Penrhyn, what the latter called the "irruption of the Goths" did not take place till a late hour. This was the arrival of Mr. and Mrs. Palmer, Mr. and Mrs. Gooch, and two young gentlemen, respecting whom there had been sufficient of whispers and expectations to render them as much the point of attraction as the handsome bride and bridegroom had already been. These were immediately followed by the Marquess of Wentworthdale, accompanied by the Russian Prince Blackensdorff; so that Lady Anne had, at the moment, her hands quite full, and Lady Penrhyn's eyes were not less busy. She had fully intended to fascinate Lord Meersbrook, but the Russian was six feet two inches high; he wore the full dress of his own court, and several splendid orders; every eye was upon him—unluckily, his eyes soon fixed themselves on Louisa, whom he thought very like his own sister, the reigning beauty of the court at St. Petersburg.

As Louisa had no desire to receive the attentions of the Prince, and Lady Penrhyn was well-practised in the art of inveigling, she would have soon carried her point, if she had not met with one who disputed the prize almost as adroitly as herself; this was Lady

Allerton, no longer the artful Miss Aubrey, who drew away poor Mary Granard's lover, but the imperious wife, who had long since taught her cautious, suspicious husband that he had been angled for by a skilful piscator, and secured by tackle the law alone could break. Of this, however, he had little expectation; the lady loved herself, if she loved not him, and, as he knew she had given her heart at one time to a man who deserted her, he lived on in the hope that her affections, awakened by gratitude to an indulgent husband, might some time revert to him sufficiently to secure the respectability of both; more than that he had ceased to hope, perhaps to care for. He was trying to become a politician, but it was by no means his vocation. As he was fatally mistaken in supposing the gentle and artless Mary a designing girl, urged on by a *manœuvring* mother, so was he in supposing that a man of his temper and habits could find solace for the wants of the heart in the occupations of the mind. Brought up by a widowed mother in the constant exercise of the affections which guarded him from the many temptations to which youth and wealth exposed him, but also narrowed his views and repressed his energies, he was by no means able to contend with the daring, or wind on the sinuous course of the cunning. Suspicion of women had been grafted in his temper as a duty by the mother, who knew how desirable a *parti* he would be deemed, but other jealousy he had none; for he was much too honourable and ingenuous to

imagine that of another which he himself was incapable of conceiving, much less carrying into action.

With Mary Granard for a wife, he would have been loved for his virtues and respected for his usefulness—he would have been a happy man, and merited his happiness; he was now helpless, at best, but frequently in positive misery, and only saved from utter recklessness by the remnants of what might be termed his better nature, or the indolence which belonged to his easy temper.

CHAPTER XX.

“How singularly those brothers resemble each other!” said Lord Wentworthdale to Mr. Palmer; “you appear to know them well; pray does the likeness run through their minds as well as their persons?”

“I know little of them for the last ten years, which I should consider the forming time of a man’s life, my lord, but I think it does *not*; in all that may be called principles and opinions, I dare say they are as much alike as the high forehead and the smiling mouth we are observing; but in other respects they differ, and each forms a most admirable specimen of the class to which they belong as elder and younger brothers.”

“So I should think; Meersbrook, desultory as his education must have been, is evidently a man of abilities, and most gentlemanly in manners (indeed, the Persians and Turks are graceful people, amongst whom he has spent much time), whilst the other is a brave, dashing fellow, who will seize fortune by the forelock, as his father did, and leave a name behind that will rival the title. Pray who is the pretty, intelligent-looking girl just led away to the dance?”

“Lady Anne’s youngest unmarried daughter Georgiana.”

“Has Glentworth, then, married a girl younger than that?”

“He has, my lord; but, though two years her junior, Mrs. Glentworth being dark, looks older; she is, also, somewhat the taller, I think.”

“I suppose the match was of Lady Anne’s making?”

“That Lady Anne wished Mr. Glentworth to marry one of her daughters cannot be doubted, but she expected the eldest would have been his choice, but poor Mary herself never thought of such a thing (God help her! she has neither heart nor eye for any man since one man misled her). In this affair, I must say Isabella was left to her own council entirely, for Lady Anne was as much surprised as I was, I really believe.”

“So young, and so ambitious!” said the marquis, musingly.

“Not one of those young ladies can be called ambitious; they are innocent of all worldly and selfish passions. Isabella was almost in the nursery, as it were; Mr. Glentworth, though not young, was a handsome man, still in his prime, intelligent and very kind; no wonder she was charmed with him, poor thing!”

“And do you really believe, my good sir, the girl married him for love?”

“Upon my honour I do, my lord; and, as the father of three girls, all married to men of their own choice, I count myself pretty learned in symptoms.”

At this moment there was a movement towards the instrument, Mrs. Penrhyn and Mrs. Gooch being about to sing, and, of course, the father could not forbear pressing towards his daughter, who was well dressed, radiant with smiles, and capable of performing her task to the satisfaction of "ears polite." Short as the conversation had been between the marquis and Mr. Palmer, it had important consequences. It implanted a dagger in the heart of one nobleman, who was a hearer by mere chance, and awoke a tender desire in the breast of another, after so long a period of old bachelorship, that mothers of every description had given him up some time ago. Little thought the good-natured vindicator of Lady Anne's offspring (to all of whom he was sincerely attached) that he had drawn upon one that which she held to be the great misfortune of her life a short time afterwards.

Poor Georgiana had heard, with great interest, the remarks of the marquis on the interesting brothers, more especially what was said of Arthur; and the pleasant smile which lighted up her countenance at the moment when he inquired "who was she?" was imputed to her admiration of his eloquence, when he found that "such things were," as young ladies feeling a preference, nay, as it appeared, a passion, for men twenty years older than themselves. There was no mistrusting Mr. Palmer; his countenance was a book, in which honesty of purpose and soundness of understanding were legibly written.

Every body was delighted with the singing ; and, in paying his compliments to the performers, more especially the bride, the marquis took occasion to converse with her as far as was possible, and convince himself that the daughter of a selfish, extravagant, and sophisticated mother might be artless and modest, sensible and upright. Helen, Georgiana, and two other young ladies sung also ; and it appeared that every body was much more pleased than people are in general with any lions, who are also exotics, to whom they condescend to be attentive, but refuse to be friendly ; rejoicing when any little conventional informality reduces the genius, whose patent of nobility the Creator himself has bestowed, below the level of fashion, and substituting ridicule for admiration, the smile of the scorner for the approval of veneration.

“ Know thy own worth, and reverence the lyre,”

is a line that should be as a fillet bound round the brow—a philactory embroidered on the garments of every son and daughter of Adam distinguished by the possession of that sacred gift, which, whether used or abused, applauded in itself or derided in its possessor, is the highest and the most inalienable distinction humanity ever has or ever can be gifted with, whether bestowed on the highest or the humblest being, in the great mass to which we all belong. We by no means mean to say that Lady Anne’s happy and pleasant little party would not have received a new impetus if

a Moore, a Bulwer, a Hook, or those monopolists of beauty and wit, Mrs. Gore and Mrs. Norton, or those daughters of Apollo, ycleped Mitford, Pardoe, and Strickland had been mingled with her "blue spirits and grey;" but we do mean to say that they were very happy without them, and that much, perhaps all, of the "feast of reason and the flow of soul," for which these distinguished individuals are loved, and sought, and honoured, would have been lost in the *melée* of dancing, singing, chattering, and flirting, to which the major part of the visitants were devoted.

But it was at her supper-table Lady Anne's talents and the good taste of her daughters were most happily displayed: every one pronounced it "the prettiest thing they had seen," and very pretty it was, considering the size of the rooms, nor was any good thing wanting, for Mr. Palmer's cook was as good a hand at white soup as jellies, and "my son Penrhyn" had sent in the Champagne which Lord Penrhyn (when he arrived on the house breaking up) pronounced to be excellent, glancing towards his lady, who had now succeeded in chaining the Russian prince to her car approvingly, whilst to her brother was directed a withering look, until he saw that the marquis of Wentworthdale was paying his bride the most devoted and respectful attention, when the current of his pride took another turn, and he determined to restore Charles to favour, seeing his wife was the fashion. He cast his eye around to find any of the sisters; one of them was

with Lord Allerton, the other with a stranger, whose high white forehead and bronzed cheeks told that, young as he was, he had braved "the battle and the breeze" in various climates.

The fact was, that poor Georgiana had been particularly anxious to avoid the young sailor, whose conduct had touched her heart so nearly ; but, as she was not the less so really to see him, she had on several occasions took an earnest look from behind any group which happened to be conveniently placed for the purpose. This attracted the notice of Lord Meersbrook, who, even in this gay assemblage, the first he had mixed with in Europe, looked more upon his brother at this time than any other person. He had heard much of the slights passed on younger brothers in English re-unions, and sent jealous glances around in quest not of a knight-errant, but a damsel, who should dare to be shy to the object of his pre-eminent affection. Whispers had reached him of "don't mistake, it is the lesser one who is the viscount ; they are exactly alike, but his lordship much the handsomest."

Under the influence of his present sensations, the stolen, and, in fact, the admiring looks of Georgiana were so grateful to his feelings, that if a high and generous purpose had not so entirely possessed him, that the power of beauty and the charm of sympathy were suspended, he might perhaps have loved her who looked so curiously on the brother of his love. In the course of the evening he mentioned the circumstance

to Arthur (who had made one in a quadrille from the moment dancing was started) saying, "she is a very pretty girl, and disengaged, I think. Mr. Palmer will introduce you."

The advice was not lost; the quadrille lasted till supper-time, and the two young people were soon gone ages in love, without having any suspicion of such a thing taking place. With the chicken in the fable, the lady might have said—

"I ne'er had been in this condition,
But for my mother's prohibition."

The gentleman might also owe his *penchant* in part, at least, to the blushes and embarrassment displayed by Georgiana, following the information given by his brother; in him it was both professional and natural to be warmly grateful for the approving smile of a "fair ladye;" and when she was so pretty, so like the bride, her sister, whom every body *was* praising, no wonder that he was absolutely charmed, and sensible of emotions different, but not less sweet than those he enjoyed on welcoming his brother to the life his own prowess had won.

There was more dancing and singing up stairs, more wit and conversation below; all were at liberty, and all stayed late; and all talked so much of the happiness they had enjoyed, that Lady Anne felt herself exceedingly tempted to give another party before the season finally closed. She had been even bespattered

with praise, so abundantly had it been showered upon her ; and, like Lord Byron, she “ awoke and found herself famous,” not like him, for doing *great* things, but *little* ones ; for it was certain that, in her day of power, she had made scores of grand entertainments, which really merited talking of, but were passed by with little comment ; whereas, now, it was evident that all the world envied the few who had been “ at home ” with Lady Granard.

When she talked of a second, however, even her young daughters, much as they had enjoyed the first, looked blank, for Louisa and Charles were positively alarmed at the first hint she gave ; and Mrs. Palmer absolutely protested against “ turning the house out of the windows again ; at least,” she added, “ till there is another wedding in the family — not a wedding like poor Louisa’s, where the bride is a fugitive one week and *fêted* another, but a regular approved marriage, which would justify the outlay.”

The Marquess of Wentworthdale had called on Lady Anne, as it so happened, at a time when her daughters were gone to Mr. Palmers, with an intention of assisting to restore the china closet to that state of propriety which they had unavoidably disarranged ; in consequence of which a *tête-à-tête* occurred of the most interesting nature, containing a promise for the future far exceeding the most brilliant visions which had ever occupied either her waking or her sleeping dreams. The vision was, however, so wire-

drawn, it was so evident that the nobleman had not got his own consent to the vague something floating in his "mind's eye," that he left her in the dark as to his wishes and intentions beyond the belief that he was determined to seek, in the matrimonial state, that happiness which had hitherto eluded his pursuit, "but that her charming family could alone supply a female suited to his fastidious taste ; it was to him a great trouble that he had never till now been aware that the world contained such treasures. Glentworth was, undoubtedly, the happiest of men."

"Had Mary been at home, I do really think the marquess would have made her an offer — as he has never seen her, he may be thinking of Helen : it was evident, he admired Louisa, who did look very well last night ; surely, he cannot be thinking of Georgiana, who is growing very like her, but is so mere a child. Yet, I have been told that old bachelors are fond of young girls, under the idea that they can manage them the best, and they may be right. The marquess has been a fine man, and he wears well ; but yet, the world would call such a match preposterous, and blame me ; whereas, there would be nothing to remark if he took Mary. By the way, Lord Allerton looks nearly as ill as she does, and his wife is at once a flirt and a vixen, yet by no means happy ; she wore rouge last night, I am confident ; it is taking to art very early in life, and proves something is wrong. Be it so ; she brought misery enough on me and mine."

CHAPTER XXI.

Whatever might have been the wishes or intentions of Lady Anne, they were cut short by a remonstrance from Lord Rotheles, which, although mildly couched, was very effective; especially as it was accompanied by a sneering reproach from his countess, "that she had kept the information from them of her having attained some acquisition of fortune in which they would have rejoiced sincerely, and which could alone account for the magnificent entertainment she had been giving."

"Magnificent!" exclaimed poor Lady Anne, as she put her aunt's note into Helen's hand; "did you ever hear any thing so malignant? More than one half of the things we had for refreshment were given, and all we had for show was lent."

"It is the newspapers which have done the mischief, mamma, extolling things so much above the truth; can we not put in a paragraph to contradict them?"

"Certainly not; the world should never know you are low in it, though it may occasionally answer to complain to a friend who happens to be rich. It is

better to be envied than pitied, whatever be the home struggle. Although this letter is vexatious, I must not forget that my little entertainment has brought me a visiter in the Marquess of Wentworthdale, on an errand of no small moment, as the Countess of Rothelles may soon learn, to her surprise, for I shall, probably, see him at the Opera to-night."

The girls remarked that their mamma was smarter, and, indeed, looked better than they had ever seen her; and Georgiana observed, "I wonder what mamma could mean about the marquess? he is a very nice old man. I am sure if he were going to marry her, I should like him very much, and I think it would be a very suitable thing."

"So it would, but I think there is no likelihood of it; I am afraid he is more likely to think of you or me."

Conjecture on this or any other topic was ended by the arrival of Mr. and Mrs. Penrhyn, with a whole packet of letters from the absent sisters, which were read with the most heartfelt delight, especially as there was, from each writer, an assurance that Mary had benefitted greatly. Isabella did not write exactly as might have been expected—playfully, or even contentedly; she appeared so anxiously endeavouring to improve her mind, in order to render herself worthy of the husband she passionately admired, that she was losing her youth, in its best season, for enjoyment; and her sisters all exclaimed against knowledge so dearly purchased.

They had travelled by sea, because the voyage was recommended to Mary, so that there was little to relate beyond sufferings, in the first place, and the mischances common to the case, and which Mr. Glentworth exceedingly lamented, on his young wife's behalf, in a letter addressed to Mr. Penrhyn. Having arrived at Marseilles before the heats were excessive, he spoke in favourable terms of the health of all, and said that, as in all probability, his affairs would be soon arranged, it was his full intention to take the ladies into Italy, as they had a great desire to see Rome and Florence; beyond that he thought they would not wish to go; and, being completely sick of the sea, would return through France, and, probably, stop a few weeks at Paris, where, perhaps, Lady Anne and her two youngest daughters would meet them. Helen was in absolute transports at the thoughts of a trip to Paris, but Georgiana seemed to think little of it. She talked very learnedly of the blue depths of the Mediterranean, the grandeur of the vast Atlantic, and surprised her sisters exceedingly by the passion she evinced, all at once, for the sea, which she was wont to dislike at Brighton; they did not, in the slightest degree, suppose that she might, in truth, have exclaimed with the beloved of Oronooka:—

“ The little spot of ground he stands upon
Is more to me than the extended plains
Of earth's most mighty empire!”

And, alas ! the emphatic *he* would soon be again upon

that element for which she had taken such an especial fancy.

But he was not yet gone ; and when the good news and the letters, also, were next day taken to Mrs. Palmer, there sat the two brothers, and most happy did they appear to be made by their presence, entering warmly into their feelings of satisfaction respecting their distant sisters, and mentioning many things connected with their present situation, which had for them considerable interest, as all things have connected with the dear, who are the distant also. There was evidently a sympathy in the nature of the four young persons which went beyond the sense of admiration, the beauty or agreeableness either party inspired ; the fraternal tie was so strong and so sweetly exercised in both, that it bound them in a manner to each other in the “ smothered flame,” which soon became “ avowed and bold ;” and, like a sailor, Arthur would soon have told his love, if Lord Meersbrook had not earnestly entreated him to delay it until they should together have visited their grandfather, Sir Edward Hales, at Meersbrook, in Kent.

He only stayed a few days in London, to take the oaths and his seat in the House of Lords, a ceremony that was to take place on the morrow, and he held himself much indebted to the circumstance of spending his first evening at Lady Anne’s, because the marquis of Wentworthdale had, with the utmost urbanity, offered to accompany him on that somewhat trying occasion,

and he felt the value of his kindness not less than the courtesy evinced by a man of his rank and importance in the court and the House of Lords. After he had expressed this feeling, adding that he wished to see Lady Anne, if she were really at home, Mr. Palmer said, "She is so now we know, and I will step over with you this moment."

"And do ask her to dine with us to-morrow, to meet these young friends, who leave town the next morning. We can only offer them a family-dinner, of course; but the business of the House will be soon over, and it may happen that they will like to go to the Opera afterwards. Lady Anne goes often for her own pleasure, and I think she might *chaperon* these dear girls, who only have been once the whole season."

"Thank you, thank you! dear Mrs. Palmer," said Arthur, warmly, "you are still, what Frederic always said you were, the kindest woman in the world."

"Well, sit you down, there is no need for you to go with Lord Meersbrook."

"I am very glad of it," said the young man, resuming his seat, and looking at Georgiana with eyes that said very plainly, "I had much rather stay with you," and her "eloquent blood" replied, "I am glad of it," though her tongue was more silent than usual.

Mrs. Palmer had already learned from the open-hearted sailor how matters stood with both; but, confident that Lady Anne would never consent to give her daughter to an unprovided or poorly provided

younger brother, she would not for a moment have allowed them the means of confirming their passion for each other, if she had not been already in the secret of the elder brother. This was his intention to persuade their aged grandfather to transfer his own heirship to Arthur, which he considered it a fortunate circumstance was in his power, with the exception of a very small estate, tied inalienably to the heir of that ancient and distinguished family. He knew that his mother's large fortune was not more than sufficient to maintain the dignities his father's admirable diplomacy had achieved, since he had maintained the honour of his country by expending the full amount of his income, save a very few thousands bequeathed to his younger son, whom he also considered (and very justly if he did his duty) as a charge on his country. At this time there was no reason to doubt that a young man so courageous, clever, and active, would get forward; but, since the country was at peace, and the late transaction had called up the warmest feelings of a most affectionate brother, who, having lost a father he idolized, a mother scarcely remembered yet sincerely lamented, and a sister fondly beloved and still regretted, felt as if he could never sufficiently evince the affection he felt for the only tie of his existence—the brave and noble boy, who from his cradle had held him inestimable, judging of his brother's nature by his own generous, unselfish spirit. Whilst a boy, Lord Meersbrook had been under the care of his grandfather, who

was exceedingly attached to him, and had written to Arthur (whilst they were in the Isle of Wight) expressive of his warm admiration, and thankfulness for his preservation of one inestimably dear to him; and on this letter Frederic founded his hopes, that a request would be complied with which he considered likely to make all happy.

Lady Anne readily promised that herself and daughters would accept the invitation of their neighbours; and so much was she pleased with the person and manners of the young nobleman—so well did she remember all the particulars of his mother's dowry, and the estates of his grandfather, that she generously determined to give him every chance of obtaining Georgiana, in the hope that the Marquis of Wentworthdale might turn his attention to Helen, who, as being the elder, was the more suitable. "I cannot," said she, internally, "see that it makes any difference to him which of my daughters he takes, if, as he says, it is my admirable mode of bringing them up which has put matrimony into his head, for it is certain I have brought them up impartially. I have had different views and expectations, but I never indulged any one of them. It would be very desirable he should take Ellen before she is of age, or she may do as Louisa has done: besides, *he* has no time to lose! he keeps talking of Glentworth, and his happiness in being attached to a young lady, whose good sense overlooked the disparity in their years, never remembering that he is a good

seven years the older, and that the peerage tells every body (more the pity) exact truth! besides, the difference in their style of person, which is by no means in his lordship's favour! However, it is my part to extol his person, and to prove that time makes no difference in men, though ruinous to women!"

Lady Anne's wishes respecting the marquis were borne out the following day at Mr. Palmer's very efficiently, for Lord Meersbrook was full of his praise, reverting to the value of his own introduction as contrasted with that of Lord Byron, whom, he modestly observed, had deserved the honour so much better. "That remains to be seen in one sense, my lord; for, although one cannot hope to see you so great a poet, as Lord Byron, and therefore not claiming the distinction which he ought to have received on the occasion alluded to, yet I think you will be a better man, a better husband, a ——"

"Pardon me, I don't think I shall be a husband soon. I admire English young ladies, but English *wives* are my horror!"

"Dear me! you know nothing about them — how should you?"

"I will appeal to Lady Anne Granard, at whose house I formed my judgment whether two ladies of rank and beauty did not conduct themselves in a most indecorous manner?"

"I think with you, my lord, exactly. But surely

you will not say that every pretty married woman indulged in flirtation?"

"Certainly the pretty bride did not; but her example was disregarded. Had I been the husband of either Lady Penrhyn or Lady Allerton, I would——"

"What would you have done, most worshipful follower of Mahomed?" said Arthur, laughing.

"I would have compelled them to remain closely veiled in the harem for many months, and fed them on bread and water!"

This was spoken with so much earnestness and simplicity, that every one laughed except Lady Anne, who warmly applauded the sentence, made many inquiries respecting the habits of women in the East, and greatly approved of all those circumstances, in conduct and education, which indicated obedience on the part of females. She knew "such doctrines were out of date, but she had strictly adhered to them in her plan of education, and the husbands of her daughters would reap the benefit of it. She had been herself an obedient wife (this required a great gulp on the part of her neighbours), and she trusted they would follow her example. She had, in fact, no patience with such women as Lady Penrhyn and Lady Allerton; but, as the first was the sister of her new son, and the second the niece of Countess Rotheles, her brother's wife, she was under the necessity of inviting them."

Amiable and condescending as Lady Anne chose to appear on this occasion, she had yet great difficulty even

in looking towards the proscribed younger brother, handsome and elegant as he really was, until she saw how positively he was the idol of Lord Meersbrook, when she found it convenient to talk of the sea, and have an enthusiastic admiration for naval heroes. Unfortunately, in addressing these observations to Arthur, she became aware of certain glances directed to Georgiana, which were answered with blushes, on which anger, amounting to rage, rose in her heart, and the poor forsaken minstrel who exclaimed—

“ And have I burnt my harp for thee?”

felt not more indignation than Lady Anne, as the thought passed her mind, “ Have I played amiable for a lieutenant in the navy? have I a daughter who might be a marchioness, and can stoop to love in a cabin?”

But she had learned to “ smooth her horrent brow” under similar times of trial, and not one of the gentlemen present were aware of the slightest change in her feelings. There was but little time for the drawing-room, as their carriages were soon announced; and, as the brothers went in a hired one, Mr. Palmer said they had better go the first, and then they would be ready to take charge of the ladies on their arrival, to which they immediately assented.

The moment they were gone, Lady Anne expressed great pain at leaving dear Mrs. Palmer, adding, “ I would stay with you myself, but am under the neces-

sity of playing chaperon to Helen. Georgiana will, however, have that pleasure."

The start of recoil given by the poor girl, and the way in which all colour fled her cheeks, shewed the un-pitying mother that the case was worse than she had apprehended; and, the more Mrs. Palmer remonstrated by saying the young ladies had never been the whole season, that places were secured and tickets paid for, the more determined was Lady Anne that Mrs. Palmer must have the benefit of Georgiana's company.

"I beg you to keep her, my dear madam," she said, at length, "in pity to herself, for she is evidently unwell; yeu see how pale she looks—something, I fear, in your excellent *cuisine* has been too much for her stomach. I commend her to your skill and kindness; it will not be the first time she has benefitted by them."

So saying, away sailed the woman of quality, seizing the arm of Helen, who, in her surprise and sorrow, looked really as ill as her mortified sister, whilst Mr. Palmer inwardly swore that his "excellent *cuisine*" should never more be tried by that cruel, conceited old woman, if she were his neighbour for a century. He did not say a single word during their drive; and, on arriving at the Opera House, told his servants merely to drive round, as he should not remain more than half an hour.

The dismay which overspread Arthur's face when he found that Georgiana was left behind assured Lady

Anne that she had been perfectly right in her proceedings, since, by quashing all idle hopes, both parties would see the necessity of conquering their foolish passion. In the mean time, she had a something not very unlike pleasure in the pain she was inflicting, for she felt that both parties merited punishment—Arthur for daring to suppose a man in his situation could love and marry, as his brother might do; and Georgiana for being such an idiot as to think of him after her warning. She must positively break with the Palmers; there was nothing else for it—they were so ignorant, and had such strange notions.

But, although Mr. Palmer gave her the opportunity, for he was certainly in high dudgeon, and accounted for the absence of Georgiana as arising from “the whim of her mother, since Mrs. Palmer herself had planned the party, and was the last woman living to deprive the young of any rational pleasures,” still her ladyship took no steps towards a quarrel. She had the consolation of knowing that any offence given to her dignity could be avenged on the delinquent who caused it, an act of justice which could not fail to be consolatory, since every one of her daughters had at times stood in stead of “guid King James’s whipping-boy,” when circumstances arose to disturb the equanimity of Lady Anne’s imperious and irascible temper.

The house was crowded, the entertainment exquisite, and, to the brothers, it was so absolute a novelty,

that, despite of the disappointment one experienced and the other resented, both became absorbed and delighted with music and spectacle so enchanting. The more Helen was pleased, the more was she grieved that her sister did not share that pleasure; and her artless expressions on this subject, together with her observations on the performance, pleased Lord Meersbrook very much, and he began to think her actually prettier than either of her sisters, though the dazzling brilliancy of complexion possessed both by Louisa and Georgiana flung all others into the shade. The circumstance which pleased him the most in her, was the evidently repelling coldness with which she received a gentleman whom he had seen her dance with more than once on the evening of her mother's party, and who accosted her with the air of a man evidently well with himself, and presuming he was so with her.

This was Sir Harry Calthorpe, who had indeed paid her much attention at that time, and appeared studiously to avoid both her sisters, a circumstance that might arise either from delicacy or pique. She, however, well remembered what Louisa had said of him; and, although without any idea of attracting attention from Lord Meersbrook, and at the risk of offending her mother, she evidently shrunk from him with the feeling that might be supposed to influence the sensitive plant on the approach of an injurious touch. There was enough of the fashionable *rouè* in the look and man-

ner of the rich baronet to assure Lord Meersbrook that Helen, modest and artless as she was, properly estimated his character, and wisely repelled his attentions, whatever might be his rank and pretensions, and he gave her credit for more of the virtues in her sex necessary for his *own* standard of female excellence than any person he had seen. He was by the same rule more charitably inclined to Lady Anne than either his brother or Mr. Palmer, concluding that some indiscretion on Georgiana's part was the true cause of the mother's conduct; and though he could certainly forgive any thing arising from love of Arthur, yet a prudent duenna might *not*; the customs of the people amongst whom he had resided so long necessarily remained impressed upon him as proper, but he already saw the value of intelligence in companionship, which could only be the gift of education and freedom, and was certain that a short time would reconcile him to European life in all things save the flirtations of married women.

Mr. Palmer kept his word: he told Lady Anne that his carriage would be found waiting her pleasure at twelve; and then, shaking hands with Lord Meersbrook and the honourable lieutenant, departed. Lady Anne almost thought his going was a *ruse*, as the latter left the box soon afterwards; but his place was soon occupied by the Marquis of Wentworthdale, who so pathetically lamented the absence of Georgiana, which was attributed to indisposition, that the wily

mother now saw clearly for which daughter the honour of his hand was designed. His admiration of Louisa had led him to fix on the sister who most resembled her, and whose scarcely developed form certainly promised the same splendid beauty so striking in Mrs. Penrhyn — “ *Mistress*, plain, unadorned *Mistress Penrhyn*,” thought Lady Anne, and her aristocratic lip curled with contempt and vexation.

“ Alas ! there was no chance of release for Louisa. Charles Penrhyn would live for ages ; otherwise, how magnificent would her beauty have appeared in black ; and how certainly, in a few years, would she have acquired the understanding necessary for using it to advantage—it was no use to think ; that case was a lost one, but Georgiana’s was in her hands ; she was her mistress, to all intents and purposes, for the next three years, and much less time than that would serve to mould her to her mother’s wishes.” For a moment Lady Anne lingered on the possibility that she might marry the sailor, secure his little fortune (for surely he had something), and a pension from his early death, by which time she would unquestionably be much handsomer, as well as much wiser—but no ! even five years, in which all this might take place comfortably, could not be allowed on the Marquis’s account—she stole a glance at him ; he was absorbed, enchanted, by the *prima donna*, and really looked very interesting, as most people do in a state of excitement ; but Lady Anne could not be deceived — in five years’ time he

would become dyspeptic, be surrounded by physicians, consigned to all the *Badens* in Germany, and think much more of a renovating draught than a beautiful young wife.

“Marrying will make a new man of him; the mixture of care and comfort, of pride in his children and fear for his wife, will keep him out of the hands of the faculty—it will be *her* health that will sink, not his. But should she die?—how much better to yield her breath Marchioness of Wentworthdale, Viscountess Conisburgh, Baroness of Horton Roberts, &c. &c. &c., than as the wife of — pshaw! I have no patience to think of a fellow poorer than even Charles Penrhyn!

“But were she *his* wife, she would not die—she would be healthy and happy, like Louisa—how shocking!—a living disgrace is worse than a dead one, for the dead are soon forgotten and constantly forgiven.”

At the moment when Lady Anne’s soliloquy had reached this consolatory conclusion, the Marquess very affectionately wished her good-night, adding, “that, on the morrow, he should call to inquire after the fair Georgiana.” Lady Anne was perfectly aware that he left her at the moment when his services might have been useful, but she thought his conduct perfectly natural, for the house was hot and the evening cold. Lord Meersbrook was kind and attentive, and, as they left the box, to her great relief, her whom she designated “the sailor” appeared and offered her his arm; for, angry as he had been, “she was the mother of that

angel of a girl;" and with so much kindness did he guard her from all inconveniences, accommodate himself to all movements, that she could not forbear lamenting that he had not stepped into his brother's shoes. She was, however, recalled to her more angry feelings by finding that both himself and brother had entered into the roomy vehicle of Mr. Palmer, and were accompanying them to Welbeck Street; on which she determined to be set down at her own house, and immediately dispatch Fanchette for Georgiana. Scarcely had she come to this determination, which included more self-denial than she was disposed to make, than she found that the coachman drew up, of his own accord, to her door, which was immediately opened.

"I did not tell you to set me down here," said Lady Anne, "did I?" for her late intentions bewildered her a little.

"No, my lady, your ladyship didn't say nothink to me, but master told me as how I must take you home; our family are all in bed, hours ago — Miss Georgina went home afore eleven."

The latter part of the sentence made amends for the former; as it was so late, Lady Anne could not think of inviting the gentlemen, especially as she knew Lord Meersbrook was setting out for Kent the day following. After exchanging a sentence with Fanchette, which related to provision for her own comfort, she turned to them and observed, she was happy to learn "Georgiana

was better since she had been in bed," and bade good-night, to the evident discomfort of Arthur, who yet could not forbear laughing at the way "in which the old cat had choused them."

"She will not do so when you come back, Arthur, depend upon it — the ban will soon be taken off, I trust."

Arthur did not understand what his brother meant, nor, at the moment, care to inquire; for, a light appearing in an upper room, he was content to gaze upon it, and, like Lorenzo,

" —— sigh his soul towards the place
Where Jesse lay that night."

CHAPTER XXII.

A short time passed ere the generous heart of the elder of these brothers experienced a shock which was as great an infliction to his feelings as if he had been positively deprived of his birthright, his position in society, any, or *all*, of the good things which Providence had bestowed on him. He was received with the fondest possible welcome by his grandfather and an aged sister, who resided with him, and had been the constant friend and first instructor of their beloved Frederic; nor was Arthur met with less affection, although much less known, because they held him in the light of an heroic preserver to their greatest treasure. A very short time served to prove how worthy he was both of their love and esteem; the manly sincerity, the professional simplicity and openness of his heart, with the sweetness of his cheerful temper, and that novel way of looking at the world peculiar to the noble-spirited and unbackneyed seaman, rendered him equally dear and delightful to all around him. Mrs. Margaretta Hales (who ne'er had changed, or wished to change, her name) declared that, in three days, he had done her more good for a rheumatic affection than

any doctor within ten miles of Brokesbourne had been able to effect — that his face, though brown, was as bright as sunshine, and his laugh was like music in the house, which had been melancholy enough since Frederic went to those far distant countries; but which, since the death of his father, had been gloomy to misery.

However intense the love of Lord Meersbrook was for his brother, yet he had felt some little misgivings as to the way he would impress two people so advanced in life, as his venerable grandfather and his great aunt. In his own schoolboy days, he well remembered that, with great tenderness, and many indulgences, there were yet many lectures given, and many rules made, into which he had fallen easily, but which Arthur never could observe more than an hour at a time; for, however willing to be on his good behaviour, that buoyancy of boyish spirits Miss Edgeworth happily terms “superfluous animation” was continually goading him into the perpetration of petty mischiefs and boisterous merriment. This disposition his subsequent life had not tended to change in any considerable degree, though increased knowledge, with much observation, and a little reading, had rendered the gaiety of the young man a very different thing to the obstreperous mirth of the boy. Few persons of his age had seen so much of climates and races as Arthur, for he had been two or three years with his father in different parts of India, before he

was allowed to devote himself to the service, in which, since then, he had been constantly engaged, but which had allowed him to make trips to various cities in Europe, and associate with persons of every description; for neither the greatest nor the gravest ever shunned the noble-looking youth, whose countenance was the index of truth and integrity, who bore an ancient and honoured name, akin to a title won by essential services to his native country. This variety of introduction, even that which included the monotony of courts, had had a happy effect on his manners, which, however excited, could never be coarse, and however situated, were self-controlled. It was long since he had found himself so tried as by Lady Anne, whom he gravely called "a great liar" for saying her daughter was poorly, and "a great tyrant" for keeping the poor girl at home, and then vanished, in the belief that his self-command would return the sooner for removing from her presence. This circumstance took place, to a sufficient degree, as we have seen, for the purposes of civility, being undoubtedly assisted by the hope, which was frustrated, of seeing Georgiana again. Not doing so (though he laughed at the moment) was, in fact, a great mortification, and he journeyed towards Meersbrook Hall by no means in the humour calculated to make Frederic assured on the subject of his intended application to his grandfather. We must glance at the early life of the elder brother also.

Our young nobleman, fond of learning, and particularly desirous to please a father, of whom, for many years, he saw very little, applied himself with great diligence to the study of the oriental languages, and at fourteen had made such progress, that his father became desirous of seeing him, to the extreme of anxiety—a feeling awakened the more from the loss of his daughter, and being then engaged in an embassy to Persia, and previously ennobled. Frederic, under due escort, proceeded to Persia, and the long parted brothers had a year of each other's society, alike sweet and beneficial to both, but which did not for an hour disarrange either the wishes or intentions of the younger, who was even then the taller and the older looking, notwithstanding the marked likeness between them. The parting was very painful to both, but most probably got over much the soonest by Arthur, busied by his new duties and perpetual change of scene. Frederic sorrowed so deeply that his father saw a positive necessity for some new motive for exertion, and he soon engaged him in learning all the manly and graceful exercises for which certain races in the East have always been distinguished, possessing already many of those noble Arab horses which might tempt him to exercise them.

The plan succeeded entirely, his health and his stature improved, his timidity vanished, and a proper sense of his own situation, in its value and its duties, succeeded, without destroying that modesty always

pleasing in youth, or impairing that habitual and affectionate obedience to his father, which had been implanted from his cradle during his residence at Meersbrook. The quietness and gravity of Eastern, especially Mahomedan manners, fell upon a soil calculated, in his case, to nourish the seed ; but this by no means prevented the natural hilarity of youth from constituting a large portion of his existence, and he became to his father the lightener of his many cares, and the dispenser of all his pleasures. His knowledge was of the kind daily called into action, his accomplishments those which could be estimated by all around him ; and his affections found their constant exercise in attending to the wishes, or promoting the honour of his beloved father, or in writing to his wandering brother, and contriving the means of enjoying short, but most cordial and happy interviews.

The Viscount Meersbrook's fatal illness was short and severe, but it did not affect his senses, and thereby deprive him of knowing that his idolized son watched his pillow day and night, with an anxiety and tenderness which supplied even the wife and daughter he had lost. When able to speak, he gave directions, on many circumstances in public business, in which his son might supply his place to the country, for which he had long and successfully laboured ; but, these duties and services carefully performed, he earnestly desired him to return to his own country.

“You must be to my father,” said the dying man, “what I should have been, the staff on which his declining years must lean; and you must also become the careful guiding friend, as well as dear companion, of Arthur. You will, I hope, marry soon, for you will be happiest in that state; and I trust you will find some good girl, whose integrity and affection will equal your own. You will not need to seek wealth; though I was happy with one who gave me much; it is not a common case, for suspicion is often attached to it. Either marry a well-informed, religious woman, or a tractable, well-disposed girl, whom you may instruct. Marry soon; but be careful in choosing, and avoid, as you would the fang of the serpent, that class of married women who seek to charm the senses of young, unpractised men, for their mere pride of conquest.”

“Married women, father?” cried Frederic, whose very soul was absorbed in his anxiety to catch every venerated word.

“Yes, my son; avoid them, tremble when you approach them; guard poor Arthur also, he is handsome and thoughtless. I would he, too, were married; but ——”

Frederic thought he understood the *but*, and silently did he lift his heart to heaven, promising himself that no want of means in his power to bestow should be wanting to his brother's happiness. After a little rest, Lord Meersbrook, as if reading the thoughts of his

son, explained to him his own future situation, his means of supporting his dignities ; and exacted from him a promise, not to disturb, by any act of unwise generosity, the provision he had made for Arthur.

“ Leave my brave boy to conquer fortune. If his country helps him, *well* (I am sure he will help *her* when occasion serves) ; if *not*, let him work on—his character is essentially that which will be happiest in the struggle for independence ; money might enervate—perhaps corrupt him. No, no, my glorious sailor son shall help himself, happy in that his kind and watchful brother will be a father to his family—*if—if—he must fall.*”

The images awakened were too affecting, and the dying father ceased to speak ; conscious he had left nothing undone for his earthly connexions, he sought to fix his mind steadily on those objects most worthy of it, nor would his son disturb him by a question or an allusion to any earthly thing. Agonizing as were his sorrows, forlorn and destitute as he must soon become, he struggled to suppress the suffocating sob that might reach the ear and wound the heart of his beloved parent ; and whilst silent tears poured as a deluge from his eyes, from his hand alone did the sufferer receive the anodyne, which might soothe though it could not save.

We will dwell no longer on this awful episode in our story ; we seek not to recall sorrow to the feeling and bereaved bosom ; suffice to say, that the young

nobleman, our well loved Frederic, suffered much and suffered long, but eventually he fulfilled all his father's wishes and duties, and that, with a due and kindly consideration for the honoured dead and the worthy living, it was so ordered, that Arthur visited him, and in due time accompanied him to his native land. On this occasion, Lord Meersbrook was less the mourner than the consoler of his brother, who, from circumstances, did not learn the loss he had sustained for near a twelvemonth, and on arriving at Ispahan almost felt as if he was about to witness the funeral of his father.

This circumstance, of course, knit the hearts of these two amiable young men more closely than ever, and the accident which occurred in the Channel placed them in the situation of the royal friends mentioned in the Old Testament:—"Very pleasant hath thy love been unto me, my brother Jonathan, surpassing the love of woman." Nevertheless, woman has her day, even where the dearest friends and strongest bonds of consanguinity forbid the bands. Arthur, whose feelings were always impetuous, had ceased to weep for his father and rejoice over his brother; but the "great deeps" of his soul had been stirred within him; and at the very time when the commotion was subsiding into that state he would have called a "lull," Beauty crossed his path, Love followed in the wake; and he entered at once into all the pains and penalties, the bitter sweets, and sorrowful pleasures, which belong to his votaries.

But, as the reader will conceive, it was no part of his nature to be a sighing swain; and, although he had heard many good stories told on board of *manœuvring* dowagers and slighted younger brothers, and had witnessed a specimen of such circumstances occurring, it yet could not enter his head that he could long cruise in any seas without securing the prize he sought. There was not a shadow of self-conceit in this conclusion; he might have said, with great truth, "she had eyes and she chose me;" but his personal advantages, great as they were, never crossed his mind. His point to stand upon was the circumstance of being a sailor; he did not underrate noble alliance and ancient blood, for he thought them capital ballast; but he had so often cheered, in his heart, as well as by his tongue, "the lass that loves a sailor," that she had become to him the "queen of beauty;" and, of all other good and great qualities, therefore, in order to render poor Georgiana the perfection of her sex, she must be and should be the said "lass," the "Black-eyed Susan," the "lovely Nan," the "bright particular star," for whose sake he could, like Romeo, have been "cut up into little ones."

As every thought and wish was told to his brother as they rose, and it was evident that the power of rambling and talking greatly increased that passion which Dr. Johnson truly observed was "much less prevalent in London than the country," Lord Meersbrook looked anxiously for the time in which he could

best open his heart, and explain his wishes to his grandfather. He one day prevailed on Arthur to go out without him, and accompany his aunt to pay morning visits in the family-coach, though a *vessel* for which it was certain he had no *penchant* ; but he really loved the old lady, and was much in the habit of comparing her with poor Lady Anne, by no means to the advantage of the younger party. It was not difficult, during their absence, to lead the conversation, which always veered either to the life or the death of the late lord ; and, on this occasion, Sir Edward Hales made more particular inquiries than he had ever done before as to the last words and actions of a son who had been the pride of his life, not less than the centre of his affections.

His grandson told him all that had passed on that awful occasion, allowing no literal deviation from truth, yet, probably, raising his voice the loudest when he repeated the praises of Arthur, and sinking it somewhat below the claims of an aged ear, when he reverted to the denial of his father respecting the alienation of property necessary for the support of his own dignities, and most happy was he when the old gentleman exclaimed eagerly—

“But Arthur had not risked his life for yours, at that time ! he had not preserved you from drowning then !”

“He had not, my dear sir : neither had he placed his affections upon a well-born, but unportioned girl,

who is really lovely and amiable; these two reasons render me extremely anxious for his future welfare. I honour my father's judgment, and concede to his opinion, and wish not to give our dear sailor any sudden accession of wealth, which he may not, at present, be qualified to use, and which his 'ladye love' would not desire; for both herself and sisters have had the mortifications which belong to poverty for years, and have gained the knowledge which can counteract its pressure. I speak not from my own observation, but that of Mrs. Palmer, the excellent woman who so kindly nursed my lamented sister, and whom Augusta held dear as a mother."

"You could quote no better authority, Frederic; but go on, say what you wish to be done for poor Arthur."

"Such an assurance of property as may enable him to ask her mother's consent, and satisfy the earl, her uncle."

"Who is he, Frederic?"

"Lord Rotheles, sir; of course, I do not know him."

"Nor I, much, thank God! he ran away with another man's wife, and his own divorced *him*, if I remember the story right; nevertheless, the impression was that he was more of a dupe than a knave. Be that as it may, he is not a man whom a Hales can desire connection with; but he helps his sister, Lady Anne Granard, who is a proud, cold-hearted woman, and ruined her worthy husband."

“ I have heard as much, but her daughters are only the more to be pitied ; it is of the youngest but one I have spoken.”

“ I like it not, I like it not, Frederic ! Seldom comes a fair bird from a foul nest. Arthur had better suffer for a month than for a life ; he must forget her ; 'twill be no great thing for a gay-hearted young man, like him. Promotion must be his mistress, and, in doing his best to attain her, he will forget ‘ the pale, unripened beauty of the North.’ ”

“ My father wished us both to marry early — more especially myself. I will not think of it till I see poor Arthur settled, for he wished that also ; and he has often told me that our family were singular from the constancy of their attachments. Both yourself and him, dear grandpapa, were left young, handsome widowers, with extremely small families, yet you formed no second connection. Aunt Margareta was only suspected of an attachment, and she has remained true to the sentiment, yet must have had many suitors. I am convinced it will be my own case, should I find an object worthy my affection ; and I have no right to place my brother out of the family pale ; he may be more rapid in his conclusions, more easily struck, and more ardently excited, but I yet believe he will be true to the family virtue, for such I consider it ; we have it on both sides, for my mother was a martyr to her love for my father.”

“ Your mother was an angel, Frederic,” said the

old gentleman, after a long pause ; “ it goes much against the grain to think of giving any son of hers to the daughter of Lady Anne Granard ; yet, I will confess, I loved Rotheles, her father, and I liked her husband very much ; it may be possible that her daughters inherit on the right side of the house. I will consider what I can do.”

“ Dear, good, generous grandfather, you can do every thing ; you can place Arthur in the situation assigned to me, the heir of Sir Edward Hales.”

Sir Edward suddenly started from his chair ; his thin and generally bending form became erect and stately, and his sunken eyes emitted a stream of lambent fire, as he exclaimed :—

“ Degenerate boy ! was it to this end you became the child I fostered in my bosom, to the forming of whose mind I bent all the powers of my own ? whose departure I lamented with tears a thousand times ; for whom I have cared and toiled, curtailing my expences that I might enlarge the estates meant for your enjoyment ? Do you cast from you the birthright of ancestors, ennobled by their virtues far more than you are by your new honours ? Remember the fate of him who sold his birthright, and afterwards ‘ found no place for repentance, though he sought it carefully with many tears.’ ”

Lord Meersbrook did not reply ; he was discomfited and rebuked, yet not, therefore, self-convicted of error, since he knew his motives to be high and pure, and

was sensible that he ought rather to be charged with too much pride, in his origin, than too little regard for its claims. The baronet resumed the subject.

“ Shall these woods be cut down, young man, whose arms have waved their branches over the graves of your Saxon ancestors ! this house, honoured by the visit of the virgin queen — these walks, planned by Bacon, haunted by Raleigh, and praised by Burleigh — landscapes that have been described in the *Arcadia* of Sir Philip Sidney and the pages of Spencer, be resigned without a sigh—given as a toy — or probably sold for a song to pay the throw of a die, or shine on the throat of a girl — swell the orgies of a bellowing crew, or be swept away by an election, which may save a spendthrift creditor from a merited jail ! Must my anxious management, my prudent retrenchments, dear Margaretta’s savings, all go ! ”

“ Pardon me, sir—pardon me for interrupting you, but I must speak. Arthur will do none of the things you fear. Though possessing a generosity that would be princely, he honours our dear father’s lessons far too much to be imprudent, and he loves *me* far too well to grieve me by that extravagance unhappily too common amongst men of his profession. He never plays, save for the triumph of skill ; and, with no less attachment than myself for these distinguished shades, he has not less pride in them, and, were they in danger, would give all he possesses, or ever will possess,

to redeem them. Had I not fully relied on his character, dearly as I love him, and anxious as I am to evince that love by more than words, I could not have proposed it ; and remember, dear Sir Edward, I did not ask you to *give* your estates. Long, very long, may it be before they are bequeathed. Time will, I trust, have taught Arthur wisdom long ere then, and myself also, and your fears will be confined to our children. May they be what all the Hales have been, and the lesson will be short !”

“ Perhaps I have spoken hastily—too hastily ; but I am an old man, and the apprehensions of age err as much on one side as the romance of youth on the other.”

“ Dear grandfather, you forget that you began life early, and have felt its sorrows acutely ; but I have always understood that the old age of a virtuous life was long and gentle. I have been wrong to urge this suit ; I will do so no more. I have over-valued my life, and sought to pay too high a price for that which has yet to prove its worth.”

“ Don’t say that, Frederic ; don’t say *that*. You have been the stay and blessing of my life, and the comfort of your idolized father’s ; your feelings are worthy of *you*, and my local attachments not, I trust, unworthy me. If for the first time in your life they have jarred, yet, in point of fact, our sense of your obligation and of your devotedness to your brother is alike binding ; and, if I had not been averse to the

connexion Arthur contemplates, I should not have started from the proposition in the *manner* I did, though the *matter* must remain the same. Here come my sister and the subject of our solicitude ; let us take both into our councils.”

CHAPTER XXIII.

“Arthur, my dear fellow, I understand from Frederic that, during your short residence in town, you ventured to fall in love?”

A torrent of blushes rose to the brow of the accused, and he gave Frederic an angry look. “Was this kind, Lord Meersbrook?” broke from his lips.

“It was meant for kindness, of a quality you are not likely to meet again, even among your naval friends, Arthur, for your brother wants me to disinherit him for the sake of conciliating Lady Anne Granard.”

“Lady Anne be ——! I beg pardon, but she is no more like Aunt Margaret than a jib boom’s like a compass, and the last woman living I should choose to knuckle to. I would not take a rood of land from Frederic to be appointed to a man-of-war to-morrow morning, for I looked on it as his (God grant it may be long ere he touch it!) ever since I was the height of a handspike. Why, the place is positively sacred, as old as the hills, and belongs to eldest sons of eldest sons from generation to generation. For aught I know, Adam planted the garden, and Eve watered the

flowers ; however, be it what it may, I have nothing to do with it beyond admiring it, and thinking a gentle swell and a light breeze would make it all the pleasanter."

" But how are you to make a wife a settlement, Arthur ?"

" I have got five thousand pounds of my own, and, with the interest of that and half of my pay, if she cannot live in a cottage near Portsmouth very snug, I shall wonder. The first lieutenant's wife hasn't so much, and the captain's very little more ; when prize money or promotion comes, of course she will have the best share, and shall have lumber of her own in abundance."

" I fear *she* will not be content with that ; I am sure her mother will not."

" Those cat-like mothers, who beat off their children at a given period, have no claims on them ; and, if Georgiana can't take a warm heart and a decent cabin, I'll whistle her down the wind speedily, as pretty as she is, and as modest looking. I ask for nothing but love on her part, and I give both that and all my worldly goods (to say nothing of my being a sailor) into the bargain. Then look at my connexions, and——"

" And *yourself*, dear Arthur," said the old lady ; " I am sure, if I were a young girl, I should look at you very often, and think nothing too much to give you."

“ Well said, Margaret ; though you are not young, there is no love lost between you, and we shall keep you to your word.”

“ With all my heart, provided Frederic thinks it right, for you know, poor dear boy, he was my first love ; and I certainly have been saving for *him* these twenty years. I had rather *give* than *leave*, so, whatever I have that you think I can spare, take it at once. There is this convenience, it is all at hand, as one may say ; and since here I was born, and here I hope to die, a very little will serve *me*, if you buy Judith an annuity.”

“ Well done, sister ! Who says the heart grows cold as the man grows old ?”

“ But I am not a man, brother, you know.”

“ No, Margaretta, I could almost wish you were, for there would be a good man the more amongst us, and the world needs such. I think, if we enable Arthur to settle six hundred a year on her daughter, Lady Anne cannot grumble, since her own husband was only able to leave her and all her children less. But of *her*, in point of fact, I do not think ; our business is to render Arthur happy, and place him in the situation his father would have desired to see him occupy. Frederic will furnish his house, and find a wedding present for his lady, and if, as he says, she will live near the coast, or at Leamington, or Bath, they will do very well.”

“ Or at Tunbridge Wells, brother, for then we can

send all kind of things by the carrier every Friday. Fruit, eggs, butter, poultry, game, bacon, tongues, pies, cream, and many more things, which will come into my head by degrees."

"The slower the better, say I."

"Pigeons, too, and venison; mince meat and potted veal; cakes of all kinds, can be carried," said Mrs. Margaret, speaking in soliloquy.

"What a cormorant's nest that woman is filling! by and by we shall have the 'beeves and the beer, and the jolly new year,' following *en train*," said the good baronet.

"Oh, grandpapa," said Arthur, looking with the affectionate yet half ashamed face of days gone by, "how good you are to think of doing so much for me now that you don't know Georgiana! I know not what to say; I feel that——"

"That you could give better than take, my dear fellow. But that would not be altogether right to those so much your elders; so make yourself as happy as you can under your circumstances. I can rely on Meersbrook's judgment in this affair, because he is not in love, you know; and I can rely on your word, if you give it me, to do nothing in a hurry, nothing that shall induce the world to look lightly on her who is to bear your name, and find countenance and kindness from your family."

"I *do* pledge you my word to that effect. I expect to be called to my ship every day, and all I desire

for the present is, permission to correspond with Georgiana, for I have reason to believe I shall not be long absent. We are both of us young enough I know to wait, but I confess I am by no means patient in matters that concern one nearly."

Whilst these things were going on in Kent, what were the "sayings and doings" of Welbeck Street? for thither we must return, though to quit the family party at Meersbrook, in their integrity and kindness, to contemplate Lady Anne and her contrivances, is quitting the light of day for the gloom of Stygian night.

"Georgiana, put on your blue muslin, and ask Fanchette to make your hair a little *comme-il-faut*; and pray try to look well and cheerful; you were not up late, and ought to appear the better for it."

"I slept very little last night, I confess, ma'am."

"Then take a turn in the square, but don't stay a moment beyond the half hour—you will still have time to change your dress."

"What is mamma going to do, I wonder?" said Georgiana to Helen.

"I fear to tell you, my love, yet I think I ought to do so. The Marquis of Wentworthdale is going to call and see if you are better. Lady Anne told him last night you were poorly."

"He is a very nice old man, and if he wants to say any thing particular to mamma, he can surely do it better than through the medium of her daughters."

“ He thinks nothing about her—*you* are his object, so take care what you do, dear Georgiana ; for should you be mistaken in the intentions of Lieutenant Hales, you will have a terrible persecution to undergo, I can foresee.”

“ I am not mistaken, Helen ; Arthur loves me, but perhaps he cannot as yet ask me to marry him, and I have no Mr. Glentworth to smooth the way for me, as Louisa had. Happy Louisa !”

“ Lord Meersbrook will not be wanting to his brother. Mrs. Palmer said he was all that was generous and considerate.”

“ I cannot doubt that ; they are like each other in both mind and person ; but if this wicked old marquis should indeed have taken such a foolish fancy into his head, mamma would refuse any body for his sake. His title and his wealth would outweigh an angel in her estimation.”

Helen felt the truth of this observation too decidedly to contradict it, and only replied by a sigh ; and after walking some time in silence, Georgiana said, in a hesitating voice—

“ Helen, could you like the marquis ? He is not so very old, and he is really agreeable, and undoubtedly there are advantages in wealth and rank. One can have many pleasures, and do a great deal of good with money. Now if you think you could, perhaps we might all be satisfied, for I am sure a sensible man of his description, when he knows both, would prefer you.’

“ I don't want to marry, but I might not have objected to oblige mamma a short time ago; but I can no more marry him *now* than yourself. If your heart refuses him, so does mine. Ask me no question, I have no right to the hopes that sustain you, Georgiana, but I cannot marry the marquis. Indeed, I shall never marry—I shall share the fate of Mary.”

“ Ah! what a splendid home might my sacrifice find you both. I wonder if I could forget Arthur, and in my gratitude to the old man become contented to be a gay, fashionable, woman.”

“ Think not of it for a moment; you could not, Georgiana, bear it even so well as I, for I remember something of Granard Park and splendid doings, but you do not, and cannot regret what you never enjoyed. If you were married to the man you loved, as Louisa is, though with fewer comforts than she has, you would still be happy; and oh! how glad should I be to share your humble abode, and assist you to manage your little income!”

“ Don't talk so, dear Helen, for I cannot be sure I shall have one to manage; and if he should say nothing till he returns from the next voyage, who knows in what a situation Arthur may find me! Surely Charles and Louisa will interfere to save me from persecution! Yet, alas! they would be proud of the connexion; so would Glentworth and Isabella.”

“ Do not allow yourself to think of any one but yourself in this case, Georgiana, for there is no occasion. If by a great marriage you could have helped all your sisters, I will not say it would have been an error; but now that we are so much better off than we were, it would be cruel to yourself, and not kind to us. I had a thousand times rather go on as we do to the end of my days, than see you pining under the load of life which no grandeur could enliven, no power or splendour could sweeten.”

“ But Isabella married a husband far older than herself, and she is happy.”

“ She married the man she dearly loved and preferred to every human being, yet she is not as happy as Louisa, I am confident; and it must be the disparity between them which gave that anxious look to her countenance. Now, you do not love the marquis?”

“ Certainly not !”

“ And you do love somebody else, Georgiana?”

“ I fear I do indeed; but you are older than me, dear Helen, and may assist to cure me.”

Helen shook her head despairingly. They were a little—and but a little—behind their time, but their mother would have severely reprimanded them if she had not feared to discompose the complacency of her own features, and make the eyes of her youngest daughter red. As things turned out, she “ kept up appearances” most happily. Georgiana, apprehensive

of words, she feared either to admit or repel, changed complexion every moment, thereby justifying the account given of a trifling indisposition, and when relieved from her present fears by the pleasant and general conversation of Lord Wentworthdale, looked up to him with such an air of confiding respect, that he again believed she had a certain admiration for him, which might be improved into a tender sentiment ; and where is the man, at his time of life, that would dispute the possibility of a fair girl's attachment, so new to the world, and supposed to be entirely free from all other predilection ?

At one time the brothers were slightly alluded to, as having been Lady Anne's attendants the preceding evening, and the young ladies became simultaneously covered with blushes. Lady Anne was angry, and her own colour rose a little, as she said—" My girls are both ashamed of their mother's inhospitality, marquis ; for those inseparable brothers came home with us last night in our neighbour's coach, but as Georgiana had been long in bed, and I knew Helen would instantly fly to her, I did not ask them in ; in fact, I was quite wearied, and I could do nothing with young men by myself at so late an hour. Besides, I knew they wanted to leave London at an early one this morning."

" You were perfectly right, I am certain, nor would they expect it otherwise ; for more modest and sensible young men I never met with. The eldest has

much of the person and talent of his father; the youngest is still handsomer, and is quite a naval Apollo."

Georgiana did not blush, but she became pale as marble, and even her breathing was impeded by the terror she felt, lest her mother should read what was passing in her heart.

Her fears were not in vain, for Lady Anne saw through and through her victim, but her cheek did not blanch, nor her pulse flutter; when, at the moment the door had closed on the marquis, she said—

"But for my care, you would have made a very pretty fool of yourself, miss! It is become high time to tell you, that by conducting yourself properly you may have the unmerited honour of becoming Marchioness of Wentworthdale; and listen to my words, for they are final. You never *shall* be the wife of that young sailor! No! not if his brother endowed him with half his fortune. On that point my mind has been made up for years. The two sons-in-law I have and the one I expected to have were all only sons, and either only or eldest sons shall ever enter my family."

"Indeed, dear mamma," said Helen, "poor Georgiana wants nobody's son."

"'Tis a *lie!*" cried Lady Anne, vehemently: "little as she has seen of him, and hateful as she knows he is to *me*, she has the immodesty, the shamelessness to be hankering after that sailor-fellow; and you, madam!

your blushes had a cause within, though not without, for Lord Meersbrook thinks nothing of you now ; and it may be as well for you not to disgust *him* by your forwardness, or otherwise by exhibiting your weakness. Go away, I beseech you ; I cannot bear the sight of indecent young women, even if they are my daughters !”

The marquis called on the morrow, but he saw only that Georgiana was unwell, and that the furtive glances she gave him indicated that either mind or body was more disordered than Lady Anne would allow. He had become really fond of her as a gentle and interesting girl, and the tones of his voice, and the pity in his eyes, really called forth so much of gratitude and esteem, that she wished for nothing so much as an opportunity to tell him how sincerely she thanked his intentions, and how much she was grieved that she could not accede to his wishes. But these wishes had never been expressed ; nor could she refer to a preference to another, since that other was not heard of. That letters, and callers, and presents, even individuals on matters of business, had arrived at the house both sisters knew ; but such good care was taken, either from good-will or ill, to prevent them from knowing who gave the presents, who wrote the notes, who made the calls, that both sisters remained in utter ignorance of circumstances which perpetually excited their curiosity and anxiety, because connected with

the dearest interest the heart can know in early and unmarried life.

The worst of all their troubles, as a present evil, was an interdict to any communication "with the people over the way;" and for so long a time had they looked to those good friends for some pleasures and many consolations—so possible was it that a single word of theirs might have relieved the gloom which hung over them, that the sight of Mr. Palmer would have been almost as dear to their eyes as either of those graceful youths on whose high brows "the hyacinthine curls hung clustering." Nor was the desire unreturned, for many a regretful look was hourly cast towards that enchanted castle, which, if not environed by a moat, was certainly defended by a warder (perhaps a she-dragon) of no common resolution and abilities, and who became a positive prisoner herself to become the jailer of others.

Louisa and her husband had repeatedly called, of course; and Helen had seen them twice for a few minutes only, when she appeared so *distract*, that Charles could not forbear to press Lady Anne to permit her to return with them "for a little change of air;" but he was informed "that, as it was time for her usual trip to Brighton, better air than the city environs could offer would soon be obtained." The second time this was mentioned, and Georgiana's company also requested, the young couple were gravely informed, that "the young ladies' conduct had been of late by no means respectful or amiable; and it could not be sup-

posed, that placing them under the roof with a person so notorious for disobedience and impropriety as Mrs. Penrhyn would improve their manners. With the weakness too common in mothers, and which Louisa would understand *some time*, she had been induced to pardon her imprudent marriage, and forget the gross improprieties which preceded it; but——”

“Gross improprieties!” exclaimed Charles Penrhyn, in a voice of thunder—a voice his gentle wife had never heard before. “What can you mean? What do you dare to insinuate? How can you mingle a thought of my pure——”

“Charles, Charles! do not speak so loud, it terrifies me, it does indeed. Mamma means it was wrong to leave the house clandestinely, to take refuge with strangers, do you not, mamma?”

“Certainly I do, madam, thereby forcing your low connexions upon me.”

“Ought you not to add, Lady Anne,” said Charles, recovering himself a little, “thereby saving me from all wedding expenses, and enabling me to come out in a new light, as a tender mother, with new schemes to entrap the unwary!”

Falsehood is bad to bear—we all shrink from a scandal; but *truth* is absolutely intolerable; and Lady Anne, with all her practised forbearance, her assumed dignity, plausibility, or whatever other qualities she might inherently possess or occasionally borrow, were put instantly to the *route*, and violent, unmitigated

rage succeeded — for what was Charles Penrhyn, that she should control herself for him? and there were few words of vituperative abuse furnished by a lady's vocabulary (and even some beyond it) that were not launched upon his head, as a "city tradesman," that of the "puling baby," his wife, his flirting sister and her *wittol* husband; but even the last, beyond saying simply "you *know* that to be false," failed to recall the anger which had distressed Louisa, and he hastened out of the house to take refuge in that of Mr. Palmer, literally trembling for her safety.

When poor Louisa "had cried and was better," Mr. Penrhyn, having explained, as far as was necessary, the cause of her emotion, and referred to the cruelty of wounding any person's feelings "in his dear wife's situation," Mrs. Palmer could not forbear to exclaim, "What will become of those dear girls! they will die by inches! How I wish Lord Rotheles was aware of their situation."

Louisa wept afresh, and the kind-hearted Mrs. Palmer suddenly dropped the subject, and only sought to console her visitor, who at length admitted the comfort Helen's power of flight, from the time her minority ceased, afforded. "Yet, how could Georgiana be left alone! her situation was now bad, then it would be worse!" The young couple departed in Mr. Palmer's coach, silent and sorrowful, Louisa mourning for her sisters, Charles apprehensive for his wife.

Shocked by the quarrel she had witnessed, and ter-

rified by the rage of her mother, Helen speedily retreated from the scene of combat, feeling as if she had seen Louisa for the last time, and that with her had departed the promise of all earthly happiness to herself and Georgiana.

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